

July 1935

OK

The American Magazine of

ART

Including "Creative Art"



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in

AUGUST

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The weather may be hot. It probably will be. But here is an issue that will divert your attention completely from the heat and humidity—and leave you as enthusiastic as a cucumber is cool!

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by E. M. Benson

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by Stuart Davis

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THREE ST. LOUIS PAINTERS

by Marquis W. Childs

Looks like this is an issue of "numbers." At any rate, we see how Joe Jones, E. Oscar Thalinger, and Miriam McKinnie represent, and interpret, different aspects of a great metropolis—heretofore more famous for its blues song—than for its artists' achievements.

BY THE LIGHT OF THE OBLONG MOON

by John D. Whiting

Memories of ultra-modernism, the fantastic vagaries of the pseudo-moderns of the exotic '20s. You'll give a chuckle down deep as you read this fascinating piece. And you will pause for a moment, too, for reflection. It's that kind of an article.

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ALSO, Forbes Watson writes about some of the fine murals done in Federal buildings, under the Treasury's Section of Painting and Sculpture.

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And, of course, *Speaking About Art, New Books on Art, Comment and Criticism, Wanderlust.*

WATCH FOR SEPTEMBER—THE INTERNATIONAL NUMBER

*The American
Magazine of*

ART

*Including
"Creative Art"*

VOLUME XXVIII

JULY 1935

NUMBER 7

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L. B. HOUFF, JR., Director of Advertising
801 Barr Building, Washington, D. C.

DUNCAN PHILLIPS, FORBES WATSON, and PHILIPPA WHITING, Associate Editors

Members of the staff can frequently be reached through our New York office in the Squibb Building, 745 Fifth Avenue. All mail should be addressed to the Washington Office.

AUTHORS IN THIS ISSUE

CONSTANCE ROURKE, in bringing to a close the series of three articles on American art, poses a possibility for the future. Miss Rourke is a graduate of Vassar; she has also taught there and studied at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France. "In the field of writing in the art departments of the University concerned with American social and cultural history and biography, with a special interest in the folk arts . . ." She has written several books: *Trumpets of Jubilee*, *Troupers of the Gold Coast*, *American Humor*, and *Davy Crockett*. She now has two other books on related subjects in progress. She has contributed to leading critical magazines. She was on the *Nation's* Honor Roll for 1934 "because of *Davy Crockett*, it seems, and more generally for 'creative research' and 'for incorporating American backgrounds into the American consciousness.'" Readers of her present article will see what the editors of the *Nation* had in mind.

ALLEN WELLER received his formal training in the art departments of the University of Chicago and Princeton. Afterwards teaching a variety of courses for six years as Assistant Professor of the History of Art at the University of Missouri he has had opportunity for extended study. The present paper on Winslow Homer was presented to the convention of the College Art Association in 1934. Mr. Weller's chief fields of interest


are American art and the sculpture of Renaissance Italy.

OLIN DOWS is one of those painters who can write simply and straightforwardly about his profession. His work last year on a regional committee of the PWAP showed him to be quick to understand the problems of his fellow artists. He continues to help them as a member of the staff of the Section of Painting and Sculpture of the Treasury Department.

JEAN CHARLOT, despite his French name, was one of those responsible for the new and vital Mexican school of art. He is a writer also, as readers will remember from his article "Art Quick or Slow" in the November, 1934, issue of the Magazine. He is on the staff of the Florence Cane School of Art, where he teaches courses in painting, drawing, and lithography.

FISKE BOYD is a painter and woodcutter. His work was first brought to readers' attention on the cover of the November, 1934, issue. Forbes Watson reviewed his exhibition in "The Innocent Bystander" for this last May.

JOHN EVERETT LERCH is greatly interested in present-day design. He is on the staff of the Ryerson Library of the Art Institute of Chicago.



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GHERARDO
STARNINO:
ANNUNCIATION

Recent
Accession
of the
William
Rockhill
Nelson
Gallery

July 1935

MORE THAN SYMBOLIC

WRITING in *Art Front*, organ of the Artists' Union, Jean Lurçat asks: "In former times the exponent of the idea of God, architect of the images of the gods, has he [the artist] ever stopped to consider in these days of the laity his own meagreness, his own solitude?" An historical account of just how the artist has been so completely segregated from the rest of an active world is not necessary here. Nobody with eyes to see can deny that the machine of production and consumption, dollars and cents, bread and butter not only distrusts the artist, but when it uses him, uses him badly. Calling him a parasite, a drone, a balmy dreamer, it has thrust him from the roots to the uppermost twigs. This concept has been justified to some extent; many artists—often those who get most publicity—are, flagrantly, just what the world suspects. The depressing thing is that they like to be. But there are others who are eager to mingle with people as they are in the world as it is. They are even willing to be workers, exchanging an aloof and frequently ridiculous prestige for an humbler role. They are trading their berets and velvet pantaloons for unaccustomed overalls. The transaction is more than symbolic.

When artists begin to reestablish their fundamental contact with the world of common men, many a doddering misconception is doomed to lose its power. For example, the schism between "fine" artists on one hand and craftsmen, commercial artists, and artisans on the other, tends to heal when workers in the various fields move together to win economic and social security. All concerned profit by the healthy rubbing of shoulders bent to the same task. Only with the winning of security can men be sufficiently self-assured to grant each other freedom of expression. And as "fine" artists work out their problems of existence, the belief that artists are *ipso facto* different or odd will be revealed as the vulgar fallacy it has always been.

Once we accept the idea of the artist as worker, regardless of the color of his collar for relief purposes, we make more immediately possible a solution of those problems of existence. We begin to see what his place in a workable social order may be. It has taken several depression years for the artist trained to enhance upper middle class festivities to see how artificial was his sojourn there. By joining the workers he not only makes an intelligent effort to assume his rightful place but he gains a cause as well. More than the essential goal of economic security, more than the urge for social usefulness, he gains an idea which is sure to give vital impulse through his life to his work. Perhaps the time has come when the artist can again espouse the cause of humanity without dulling the eyes of his aesthetic conscience. "Meagreness" and "solitude" need no longer be his secret sorrows.

F. A. WHITING, JR.

AMERICAN ART: A POSSIBLE FUTURE

By CONSTANCE ROURKE

IN NONE of the arts has our full native inheritance been clarified. It has been our fortune to create briefly, hastily, insecurely, and then to press on to some new and not always clearly understood objective, with the result that the arts in this country have shown many brave beginnings and few developments, and even these have often been casually buried and are to be found now only by excavation, like the artifacts of a forgotten city.

These careless approaches may prove to have been excellent for a people whose intentions are still experimental and who, presumably, have been trying to create arts distinctively their own. Much has been made of our "cultural lag," our lack of consistent aesthetic purposes. But it is doubtful whether the beginnings of any art are ever orderly, and when patterns have become sharply grooved they are usually lifeless. Our so-called "lag" may be nothing of the kind. Instead we may be moving with hesitation in new directions.

Within the last dozen years one of our periodic rushes of rediscovery of our past has occurred; and if the evaluations are conflicting, gradually many hidden facts have been coming to the surface. In music a whole continuous underply begins to emerge, pre-Handelian, based primarily upon the dance, continued in part by the religious songs of the early New England singing schools, by both white and Negro spirituals, and by the British ballads, spreading into fiddle tunes and songs of the southern mountains and of the range and lumber-camp, often mixed with other musical materials and showing original variations on new soil and under new conditions, and consistently maintained even to the present day in widely scattered areas. Here indeed is a whole musical heritage, affording something more than folk-tunes for musical decoration, rather to be used as European composers of the past have used a similar but not identical music, for a fundamental native schooling.

For years critics have lamented the absence of an American folklore and, building from this hypothesis, have formed dreary conclusions as to the future of the American arts. But our folklore is now seen to be abundant. Enough of this has come to the surface to indicate that, whatever its derivations, it is unlike that of other peoples in its essential patterns. Through it our early fantasies and mythologies are coming back to us, showing the secure beginnings of a native poetry and a native language; and the flow of these patterns into literary expression can be traced from Hawthorne and Melville to Mark Twain and Emily Dickinson and Edwin Arlington Robinson.

Our painting seems to have behind it less consistent traditions than our music and literature, but it would be well not to dogmatize about this in view of unpredictable discoveries in the other arts. And interpretations have often been wide of the mark. A favorite argument has been that the Puritan builder suppressed ornament as the result of a deliberate process of theological reasoning and that the blight has spread among us down the years. But, though the average Puritan had considerable power as a dialectician, it seems doubtful whether with hammer and saw in hand he often exercised this power and blocked an earthy impulse. For one thing, those using hammer and saw in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not likely to be Puritans. The proportion of yeomen and journeymen was very large who remained outside the fold of the theocracy, even though it was to their clear advantage to enter.

Puritan and non-Puritan alike were influenced in this long period by the tendency toward the abstract in Calvinistic theology, and equally by the general turn toward abstraction which came in England with the Reformation and took many speculative forms. Puritan or non-Puritan, the journeyman builder belonged pretty much to his time. Instead of his being thwarted, it seems likely that abstract values gave him an un-



CAPTAIN THOMAS SMITH (?): MAJOR THOMAS SAVAGE

Collection Henry L. Shattuck, Esq.

defined pleasure, that he even took a sensuous delight in the elimination of ornamental detail. Certainly form, strict but apparently casual, was rarely lacking in what he created. Its quality may be traced in everything to which he and his race have turned their minds, from meeting houses and clipper ships to metaphor and idiom. And this circumstance can be pressed toward the conclusion that the New Englander, with his self-contained creative powers and his passion for migration, left his distinctive print wherever he went in this country, creating a tendency among us toward the abstract which has been strong if unconscious and not as yet fully developed.

As for the pioneer of all ancestries or regional affiliations, a familiar theory has it that he was destructive of the amenities and the arts, but like many other generalizations about American life and the American character this does not bear the test of a close scrutiny of the record. Women often carried portraits or clocks with glass paintings or delicate china on their laps in oxcarts over hundreds of miles into the western wilderness, and their children often kept these intact. In a Tennessee cabin I have seen a silver lustre cup of exquisite shape, which had been broken into small fragments and coarsely mended, but which had been preserved with pride and pleasure for its aesthetic values and its symbol of a tradition; and similar evidences will be found on almost every one of our successive frontiers.

Perhaps too much has been made of the folk handicrafts, the carvings, whittlings, wrought iron, flower paintings, hooked rugs, woven bedspreads, and homespun, of the pioneer. These often have lasting creative values and join with other evidences to suggest the basis for a native approach; but what becomes more important in retrospect is the recurrent proof that they afford of visual and tactile skills and the steady, widespread use of these. Pioneer experience was extraordinarily full of subtle preoccupations for the eye and hand. To follow a hardly discernible path or trace in the forests, to notice slight essential changes in vegetation, in falling light, in contours of the ground, in the undercurrents of watercourses, was part of a neces-

sary habit which extended through several American generations and is still to be found among many whose break with the land seems almost complete. And the typical pioneer or frontiersman was master of those daily and primitive arts that have often afforded an ancestry for the fine arts. His supple handling of weapons, his use of skins and furs, his construction of necessary tools, and not least his free sense of personal decoration, were all firmly restricted by economy of use and means and indicate in outline the aesthetic approach.

As for an outcome in larger forms of expression, did this exist? We are impatient for an outcome; we always have been. From an early day, almost from the close of the Revolution and possibly before, our expectations as to aesthetic fulfilment have been nothing short of stupendous. All at once we were to have all the arts, on the epical scale. Small western newspapers foretold the certain event in the eighteen thirties and forties. We are still strangely afflicted by that obsession. Because the grandiose fulfilment has been lacking we have failed to perceive small but hardy evidences of those fresh forms and fresh approaches which would seem the natural result of an era of discovery, and may form beginnings for distinctive arts.

Woodcuts revealing new native types of the frontier and the backwoods with a sure linear attack and a pungent humor may be found scattered in old almanacs. As one turns old engravings on some single subject, say that of the Indian, here and there a striking bit of composition will appear, with primitive qualities boldly transcribed in terms of light and arrangement. Often these effects will be incomplete, shown only in a single passage of a drawing, set against a trite, blurred notion of what the wilderness was like. These evidences are likely to be highly discontinuous. The name attached to an interesting piece may not easily be found again. Many are unsigned. To draw together those of genuine worth over a period of years would mean a long search through humble sources, and because of our odd bias away from the popular arts (odd in a democracy) they are often difficult to find. The



G. W. MARK: WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE
Collection the Folk Art Museum

casual fate that has overtaken Audubon's drawings, so sure and so original in color and design, is an indication of our established tendency to overlook any but the formal evidences of an art. And it is only recently, through the discoveries and interpretations of such critics as Mr. Holger Cahill and the Nadelmans, that American folk painting and sculpture—"the art of the common man"—has received any recognition whatever.

Even in their own day this expression was probably brief and fragmentary. Experiment was continually being blotted out, not by the scornful and destructive pioneer but by forces beyond his control. Whatever was created, whatever took shape out of a formative culture, was likely to be destroyed by the mere force of migration, acting like a vast physical upheaval, destroying small, tangible things and always tending to eliminate them, whatever the wish of women in oxcarts with their clocks and their delicate china. The related destructive force was that of fire. Native beginnings, particularly in the visual arts be-

cause of their destructible character, were reduced by repeated holocausts which extended from the burning of cabins and stockades in New England, as the result of Indian raids, down to the mid-century bonfires of cloth-and-paper-towns in California, and onward to the action of Mrs. O'Leary's cow, and indeed to a very recent day. Fire in this country has been a large and obvious yet unreckoned anti-cultural agency, and must be counted as part of the cost of making new, rash, primitive beginnings. For the rather hazy, popular theory as to the destructive nature of the pioneer, another, simpler reading of the record can be substituted.

II

Naturally European aesthetics and the European arts have been an influence upon all our creative expression; but in literature and music the invasion seems to have been more gradual than in painting, and perhaps more easily assimilated. For the visual arts the first great influx apparently began with



EARLY AMERICAN PORTRAIT

First Half of Nineteenth Century

Collection the Folk Art Museum

the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in 1851, when under the sway of Albert, the lush Victorian abundance began to burgeon and bloom with a vengeance. Immediately we had in New York our own feebler Crystal Palace, and a gaudy, insipid acreage of oils so quickly became the rage that the auction rooms of the infant town of San Francisco were filled with them, advertised as specially imported from abroad. What Lewis Mumford has called a "pillage of the past" followed so quickly and feverishly that the possibility of assimilation was excluded, and the

drive from the American center was continued by the pull of the foreign schools.

In the practical arts, on the other hand, it was readily taken for granted in this country that native skills could be developed on native ground, and they were, as in the unique and cunning designs of clipper ships and in the widening number of mechanical inventions. But as to the fine arts a false notion was dominant, a notion that by no means was peculiarly American. The artificial division between the practical and the fine arts had long since taken place in Europe, with

the result that the one tended to be lost or obscured and the other separated from vigorous and natural sources.

Let us lay this burden for a moment at the already over-crowded door of the *bourgeoisie*. The natural interpenetration of the fine and the practical arts had been broken by the recession of the guilds and the rise of the small capitalist class. An instinctive functioning had been left behind. A whole outcome cannot of course be given any single ascription, and the tendency of the Reformation (or the turn of thought that was most highly concentrated in the Reformation) had likewise a disruptive and divisive effect as abstract and intellectual elements were introduced into the concrete cultures of Europe.

In other words, American painting began to take shape in the midst of a thorough and widespread confusion of aims, and for us confusion has been worse confounded because a difficult cultural destiny has been upon us from the beginning. On the whole, the European groups among us have meant to cast Europe behind them; yet a persistent awareness of Europe, of European values, of what Europe has thought of us and what we have thought of Europeans has been steadily with us. This awareness has become the sharper because Europeans have bent themselves to the task of judging our attainments with thoroughness in a great amount of letterpress.

We have both fought these judgments and yielded to them. Our mixed attitudes—our languishing wish to conform to European standards and our sensitive belligerence—appear strongly even in the folk plays of our early stage. They recur in the explosive, highly posed, toplofty humor of *Innocents Abroad* and *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court*. Our relation to Europe is a subject which we have never been able to let alone. We have been obsessed by it, and we haven't known what to do about it.

In the visual arts and in art criticism the dilemma has been particularly acute. The more or less explicit idea governing most of our art criticism has been that our art would naturally become a sequence within the art of western Europe. With enough European schooling and a sufficiently large number of

civilized contacts, it has been hoped that aesthetically we might at last begin to develop. We had only to catch up with Europe, so to speak, by diligent study.

This is to disregard the ways in which cultures have grown and been sustained in the past. Most cultures have at some time been subject to foreign influences, but surely the center of growth of any distinctive culture is to be found within the social organism and is created by peculiar and irreducible social forces. It is plain, as Franz Boas says in his introduction to Ruth Benedict's recent *Patterns of Culture*, that "hardly any trait of culture can be understood taken out of its general setting." And Dr. Benedict insists as her major thesis upon "the importance of the study of the whole configuration as over against the continued analysis of its parts."

Dr. Benedict cites Worringer as showing "how fundamental a difference this approach makes in the field of aesthetics," and Worringer's argument has its suggestion for ourselves. "He contrasts the highly developed art of two periods, the Greek and the Byzantine. The older criticism, he insists, which defined art in absolute terms and identified it with classical standards, could not possibly understand the processes of art as they are represented in Byzantine painting or mosaic. Achievement in one cannot be judged in terms of the other, because each was attempting to achieve quite different ends. The Greeks in their art attempted to give expression to their own pleasure in activity; they sought to embody an identification of their vitality with the objective world. Byzantine art, on the other hand, objectified abstraction, a profound feeling of separation in the face of outside nature. Any understanding of the two must take account, not only of comparisons of artistic ability, but far more of differences of artistic intention. The two were contrasting, integrated configurations, each of which could make use of forms and standards that were incredible to the other."

Now whether or not so positive a contrast exists between our artistic intention and that of European groups, the fact remains that our "configuration" is not the European "configuration," either socially or geographically.



SETH EASTMAN: LACROSSE PLAYING AMONG THE SIOUX INDIANS
Collection Corcoran Gallery of Art

And whether or not we derived our early motivating ideas from Europe, these have been shaped to our own distinctive ends. It would seem obvious that our art, if we are to have one, must spring from the center rather than from the periphery of our social pattern. Yet our criticism on the whole has considered European art in the absolute terms to which Worringer refers, and has related American art to this as if no basic differences existed between the groups of civilizations. Oriental influences have been discussed as though it were a mere matter of individual cleverness to assimilate them. To follow a single phase of Worringer's argument, a general attitude toward nature may prevail among us (and probably does) which is wholly different from that which prevails in England or in Spain, and this should lead to differences in expression; yet certain artistic achievements in England or in Spain are considered as absolutes which we should imitate. The results of such experiments will necessarily be faltering.

Our painting has never been fully con-

sidered in its native cultural relations and implications or basic intentions, nor is this strange, since the elements of our culture are only now being discovered and defined, and indeed the whole movement toward such explicit cultural definitions anywhere is comparatively a new one.

III

A fumbling effort to create an indigenous art appeared early in stress upon the American subject. The spectacular Indian was brought to the fore, and painting on this theme was largely bad because we never in any sense assimilated the Indian, and because Americans of an early period were governed by two extreme ideas, that Indians were savages who must be exterminated, and that they were figures in a primitive idyll.

This last, deriving from Rousseau, still obtains among many Americans who are creatively adrift, and may persist because certain tribal cultures, particularly that of the Pueblos of New Mexico, present definition and com-

pletion while ours is chaotic. Dr. Benedict might go further and suggest that what she calls the balanced Apollonian culture of the Pueblos offers a resting place for imperfect Dionysians like ourselves. Undoubtedly there is a good deal of wear and tear in being Dionysian, and our efforts in that direction have sometimes been particularly strenuous. But whether this small group of Apollonians—the Pueblos—can offer us a point of artistic departure is another matter. We should be obliged to go the whole way with Mary Austin as to the fundamental American rhythm, and then find a reason for selecting this one, highly distinctive tribe as a prototype for ourselves.

Consciousness of the American subject continued intermittently through the nineteenth century, in the abundant production of the Hudson River School, in those great mossy, green and brown dioramic landscapes that seem inspired by the American poems of Felicia Hemans but that do somehow convey something characteristic of the American scene. The paintings of Inness reveal that “proprietary sense” of our landscape which Mr. Gutheim has noted (*The American Magazine of ART*, May, 1935). But though that geographic adaptation and expression which Mr. Gutheim has outlined appeared in all the arts, there were plenty of divergences. Church, Hunt, Washington Allston, LaFarge, both the Giffords, Martin, Whistler, used alien or remotely symbolical subjects, sometimes to the exclusion of others, and the emphasis soon began to shift to techniques.

At the turn of the century came the overwhelming discovery that subject was unimportant. The American subject was tacitly, sometimes openly derided; it was certainly left behind by American art students in the foreign schools as they began to thread the mazes of highly intellectualized modern theory and experiment. The powerful innovations of post-impressionism, *surréalisme*, and the rest became magnets. Now by another whirl we seem to have returned to the American subject as primary. This emphasis may have been dictated by recent necessity, but a school of renewed conviction has apparently arisen as part of the general move toward—

or back to—a sometimes militant regionalism.

The apparently simple approach for the American artist by way of the American subject can offer plenty of pitfalls. The painting of Grant Wood, with its American types and regional backgrounds and themes, has all the orthodox elements of a native art, but this painter has many times used superficial and transient elements of the American subject without touching its core. To make paintings look like crewel work, presumably because crewels were a familiar American medium (usually a bad one) is a regression quite as definite as would be another orgy of burnt wood, undertaken because the poker and the oak plank were easy to come by in the American home before the passing of the stove. To give a portrait in oils the style of a daguerreotype even to the shine of the copper base, presumably because the daguerreotype has played a large part among us, is an extreme sentimentalism that has nothing to do with the art of painting. Grant Wood seems at his best in some of his more casual decorations where a conscious purpose has less play, or in direct satire, for which a solid native tradition exists in the precise field which he has chosen, the portraiture of the type—a tradition which has established itself through many forms of our folk humor.

Yet a wide use of the environmental subject would seem peculiarly necessary for us because of our situation as a people whose culture is still undefined and incomplete. We do not know our land as peoples of older, smaller countries know theirs. Because of our continual mobility we lack a deeply rooted and instinctive knowledge of the underlying natural forms by which we are surrounded. We have rarely submitted for long to the discipline of place, though in the large we have been shaped by its earthy elements. Turner, Huntington, Ellen Semple and others have analyzed the power of the land in the formation of our societies, and its force appears outside social economies. Rhythms of hill and bottom land and prairie and mountain, native qualities of light or murk, have left their print upon the social mind and imagination. They have been—they still are—among our aesthetic and cultural determinants.

It is not that we require mere faithful transcriptions of our sharply varied landscape or shore, or of the peculiar, stratified aggregations which make the American city, though these might offer more to a people still in process of self-recognition than the exponents of "pure" art would be willing to admit. Socially considered, there would seem to be a wide place for the honest journeyman painter—for the honest and simple pleasures of recognition. Beyond this, the land remains formative in a strict aesthetic sense. Outer subject—the mere American scene—may fall away. Many artists may soon leave this behind, but the inalienable patterns will remain.

In the same way the American type and its many variations may become something more than visual material. Posture, gesture, movement, bone structure, ranges of individual ex-

pression—these inevitably suggest underlying social ideas and emotions and motives in terms of typical form. They provide clues to the governing complexes which belong to us and which make our culture distinctive from that of others.

Those who have derided subject are in a sense right. Our eager young art students who have been swept away by every new theory have their justification. They have sought a perception by means of which the final transcendence of art over its materials may be accomplished. It is obvious that in any final expression subject becomes secondary. Their mistake has been to suppose that such perceptions can be discovered in a vacuum anywhere. They have failed to notice that the young foreign artists with whom they have associated have all had an



EASTMAN JOHNSON: CORN HUSKING

Collection Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts



WINSLOW HOMER: THE DORY

Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

initial, unconscious schooling which the American lacks. The young foreign artist has of course long traditions in the arts which may be used in sequence or for departure: but even more significantly, he knows his environment and his native culture through association with others who look upon the outer world with eyes not unlike his own, and who suggest identities by a thousand communicative means—idiom, intonation, gesture, dress, social choices. Whatever his individual variation, he can draw unconsciously from a whole flux of basic social patterns. With us such patterns are not yet abundantly established, or are still unrecognized.

IV

Let us lay down the principle that the American artist cannot take off from the same points of departure as the European artist. Let us accept the fact that it is futile for the American artist to try to "catch up" with Europeans because at best he is trying, often obscurely, to do something of his own.

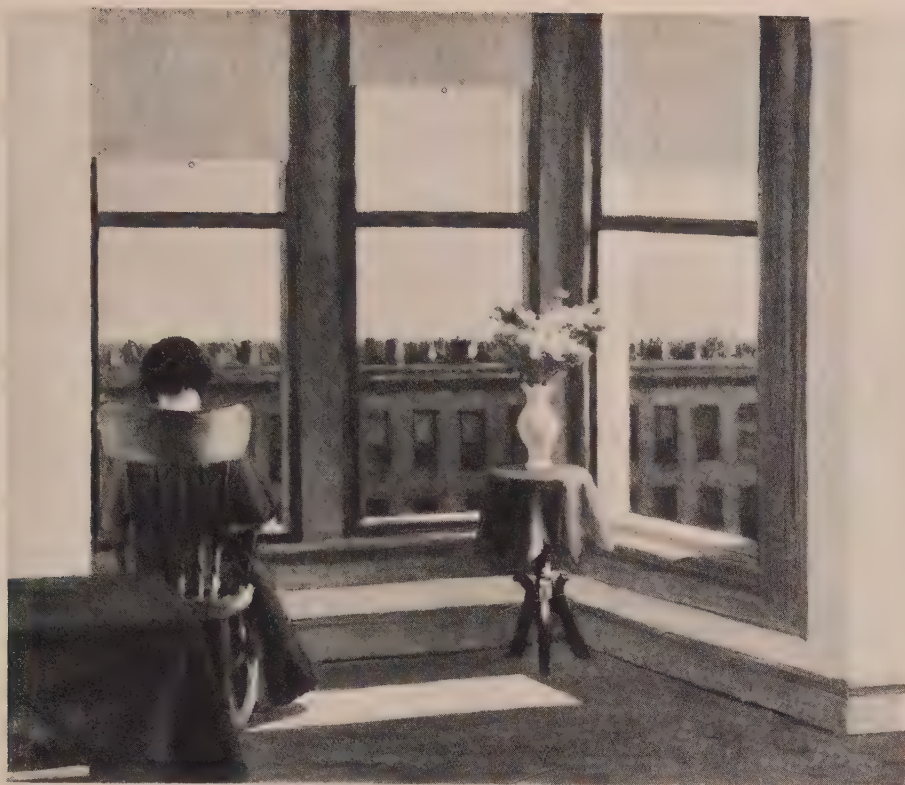
In his complicated but really rather thrilling

dilemma, the environmental subject will be one clue to native forms—an elementary discipline. His further and more difficult problem is to draw upon the many subtle evidences of an unfolding tradition. A process of discovery and rediscovery is going on, just now with acceleration, but until the materials of all our culture become known and are easily possessed the creative worker in any of the arts will necessarily be thwarted.

Here and there indications appear as to the stimulus and reinforcement which these materials may give to the painter. Our still half-buried folklore abounds in the purely legendary, and in this, essential American types, rather than characters, have been drawn and redrawn. Basic tracteries are there which might be full of suggestion to the mural painter. This is not at all to propose that he should apotheosize Mike Fink and Davy Crockett, John Henry and Paul Bunyan, though these legendary heroes might lend themselves well to mural treatment. But the strong, prevailing legendary quality, with its native biases, naturally would have much to



THOMAS HART BENTON: "SHE'LL BE DRIVING SIX WHITE HORSES" (LITHOGRAPH)



EDWARD HOPPER: ROOM IN BROOKLYN

Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

say to him, because the sense of legend lies broadly at the base of mural painting. From this special abundance he could gain a quite positive sense of direction.

As one reads consistent signs in our cultural history it would seem that very great sequences of mural painting should develop among us. This is a highly social art, and we have always gathered easily in crowds. A dozen reasons—timidity among them—might be mentioned as to why we have left empty the walls of our many gathering-places. An acute sense of the more conspicuous phases of social expression among us, as in revivals, camp-meetings, political demonstrations, lodges, parades, and even lynching, might give the American muralist a knowledge of basic social outlines as well as an extended range of materials. Thomas Benton has used some of these. A wide understanding of the dominating social forces might reveal subjects of quite a different order from those which he has chosen. And if our

painters were fortunate enough to know well some of the folk-satire directed against our early flamboyant oratory, it may be that the lack of control, the tendency toward excess, which often afflicts our artists when they approach large subjects or utilize large spaces, would be objectified and reduced.

The American painter might gain assurance in a contemporary mode if he knew by heart the spare abstract as this appears in many phases of our folk-expression, particularly within the New England tradition. Woven into all our folklore is an acute observation of the external world which any artist could afford to know well, and this tends to be poetic rather than naturalistic. It is typically in key with the abstract. Indeed a full knowledge of our folklore and folksong would reveal the subordinate place that naturalism constantly took in our early free expression. This absence in itself may constitute a tradition, and the underlying poetry and humor might give the artist something of the lift



CHARLES BURCHFIELD: OHIO RIVER SHANTY

Collection Phillips Memorial Gallery

which he must have if subject and technique are not to leave him in chains.

This is by no means to lay down the thesis that the painter must be schooled in all the arts. The talent of many painters seems to be channelled in the single mode. But in the large, the problem for the American artist is a cultural problem, and it is only through a full appropriation of our cultural tendencies that the sound frame of native reference, which major painting requires, can be provided.

If such appropriations cannot easily become an individual matter, it is true that certain artists have accomplished them. In our own time Marin has overpassed the demands of subject and has used that turn toward purity of color and abstraction, which have a secure place in our traditions, with a humorous assertion of personal idiosyncrasy which anyone familiar with forms of our character will immediately recognize. I know that Burchfield has been regarded as an unsparing realist and even as a satirist, but it seems to me that what he accomplishes is not an ex-

posure of facts but a synthesis of certain deeplying qualities in American life. He is acutely aware of its melodrama, which has often appeared with a kind of driving poetry, infusing ugly materials. If, as has been said, his deserted mansions stand aloof from the earth on which they are planted, this separation from environment has been a large part of our experience.

The individual artist must always make his own special discoveries, but we shall gain if he is not pressed too hard to attain them, if he need not make them alone. The greater ones will survive the effort, but wastage and bewilderment will continue among lesser men who are too good to lose. A sensitive historical criticism would seem a major necessity, broadly grounded in native research as well as in aesthetics. A prodigious amount of work is still to be done in the way of unearthing, defining, and synthesizing our traditions, and finally in making them known through simple and natural means. Beneath this purpose must probably lie fresh reconstructions



ADOLF DEHN: NATIVE OF WOODSTOCK, N. Y. (LITHOGRAPH)



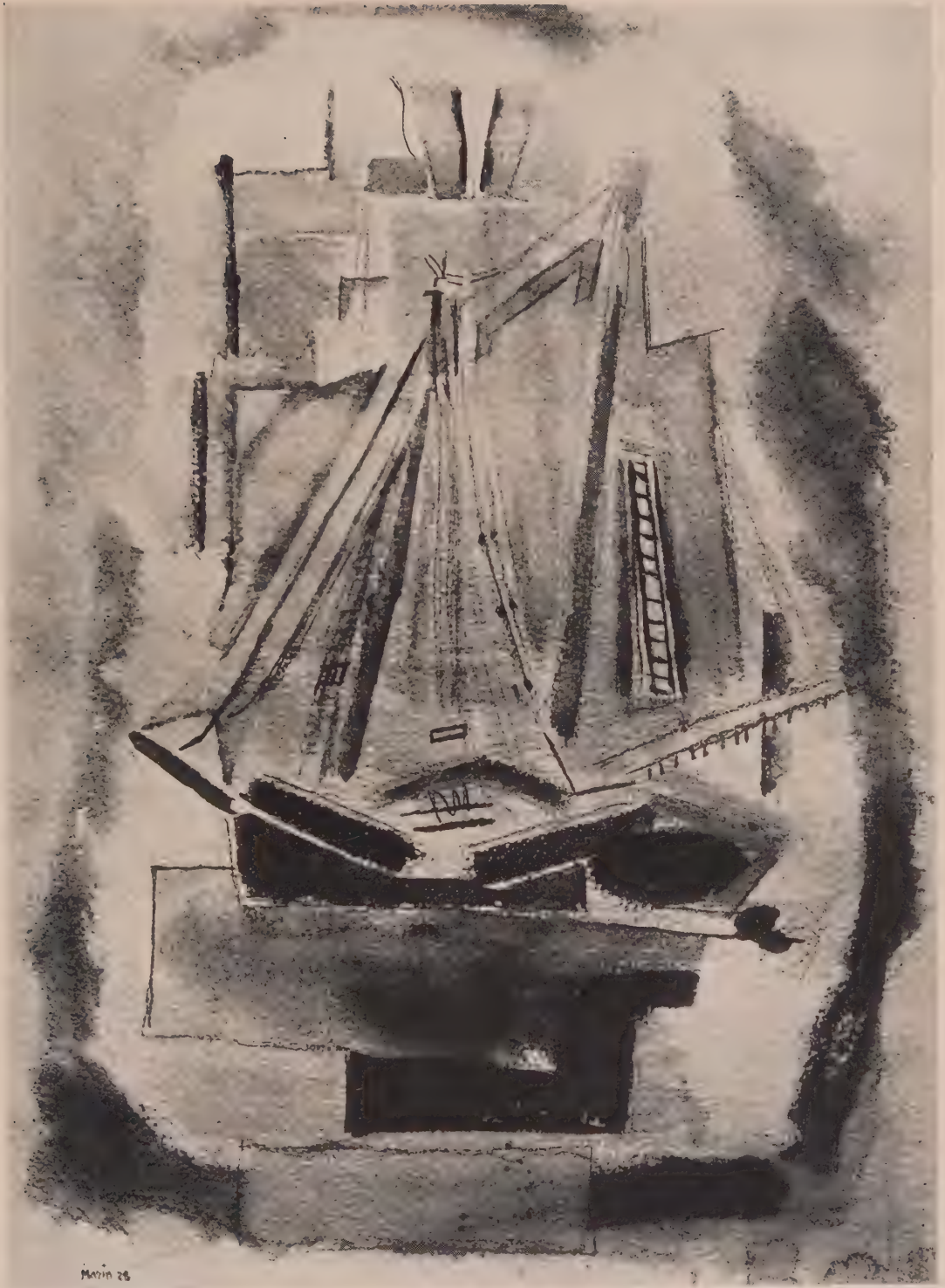
GRANT WOOD: FRUITS OF IOWA
Murals in the Montrose Hotel, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

of our notion as to what constitutes a culture, with a removal of ancient snobberies and with new inclusions.

This is not in any conceivable sense to advocate a policy of artistic isolation. With all the support that definitions of our own traditions may give him, the American artist will necessarily run full-on sooner or later into the uncertainties and over-pliant ambitions which now seem to cut across all expression everywhere. He cannot escape his fate all at once, as an American with a partially illegible and syncopated history behind him, or as a citizen of a world that now seems to face many economic, social, and cultural crossroads. Yet recognition of the peculiar elements which form American culture would seem fundamental for both the artist and the critic, whether or not they wholly like what they find.

The intellectualized self-consciousness which

was a partial outcome of the Reformation and which has developed through the intervening centuries is apparently besetting all artists everywhere. With all his handicaps the American artist has at least the advantage of a fairly complete background for this mode. It began for us with the landing of the Pilgrims and was continued by fine-spun arguments in all the theologies. The intellectualized, self-conscious attack has become in a general way a national habit, even a rough technique. This technique can be turned toward the definition and solution of our difficult cultural problems. Perhaps the American artist cannot now assume those simple and intuitive attitudes which the artist always wants—which most of us want—but he may consciously work toward a discovery of our traditions, attempt to use them, and eventually take his inevitable place.



JOHN MARIN: SHIP FANTASY
Collection Phillips Memorial Gallery



HERMAN MARIL: THE STORM

HERMAN MARIL

By OLIN DOWS

HERMAN MARIL has found himself at twenty-six. He has digested from a number of sources a personal and subtle language that is sophisticated and simple. This precociousness comes through a definite development. It is not only fluency and talent. It is a mature point of view. At a time when many painters are experimenting without special direction Maril seems to have laid out a course. He is pursuing and solving definite problems and objectives.

I think you feel this development when you look at such an early picture as the "Ellicott City Bridge," and compare it with the "Baltimore Water Front," reproduced in the

April, 1934,* issue of this magazine, or any one of his recent canvases.

The early picture has more of the amenities of painting, a laquer-like surface, charming color, a facile sense of decoration. In the later ones the purpose is clearer, the mood more enveloping, the palette more personal. The latest pictures are still more intense and pared down. They are directness itself. Their simplified treatment of light forces attention. There is in this work successively less derivation and decoration, more observation and personal interpretation. It is a very healthy sign of Maril's steady and pointed development.

* See page 179.



HERMAN
MARIL:

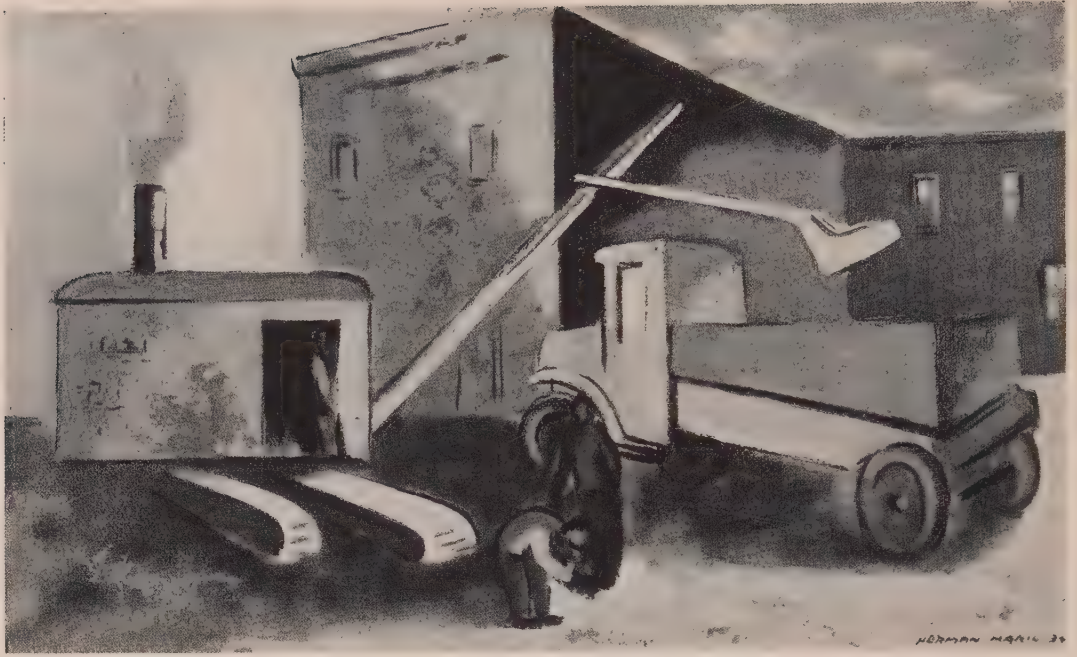
MARE AND
COLT (1931)

Collection
Edward B. Rowan

Maril says that his aim is to reduce ideas felt or seen to as simple a statement and as thorough an organization as possible. These ideas are pictorial. He sees the life around him with a painter's eye. His purpose is clear. There is always a point. It is expressed through an underlying geometric skeleton, an integrity of structure that I find very sympathetic. His observation is acute, but its statement is reduced to the bare necessities of expression. It is very much "in training." His greatest danger, as I see it, is in the exaggeration of this understatement into an arid mannerism.

He frequently clothes these simplified conceptions with subtle color and tone, a variety of handling, a poetry and mood that intensify one's pleasure and delight in the structure. This is not anomalous—but it is surprising. It is spiced art; it teases and attracts. His relation to Picasso and the modern geometric painters reminds me of Chassériau's to Ingres. In both cases there is a poetic and romantic enrichment of an obviously calculated structure.

His pictures rarely get away from him. He has them well in hand. Observed details are marshalled to aid the main purpose. Inci-



HERMAN MARIL: STEAM SHOVEL

dentials are carefully suppressed or eliminated. The result is extraordinarily concentrated. There is no mistaking his meaning; but here again he may be in some danger. He neglects the charm that detail gives, the interest of character, the superficial incidentals of things seen. His few figure pieces are not sufficiently pushed; they seem to me bare, a bit unreal. They need more study and consideration. They lack the lusciousness of life. Even small figures in the compositions seem to be neglected, for, although they have their place and reality in the pictures, they seem somewhat dry, somewhat inhuman—too obviously pushed into a pattern. This semi-abstractness of figures always worries me even when it is consistently carried out.

Maril transcribes fact. He does not paint either sunlight or moonlight, or a scene as it happens. He takes away the memory of a thing observed and gives us an interpretation of this memory as it has settled and assimilated itself in him. This assimilation is one of the essentials of a good painter's makeup. It is the unifying force that gives a picture vitality whether it is made directly from nature or, like Maril's, from a memory, or from the

imagination. This is at the root of what we call originality or style.

I cannot emphasize this personal quality too strongly for it is, with Maril's composition and structure, the thing that interests me most in his work. It suffuses itself throughout. It is what makes each part of his pictures—the composition, color, and drawing—personal and alive. It is the rhythm that weaves these elements together, that unifies his work as a whole, and gives to each canvas its pictorial personality.

His art is a curious combination of movement and repose. The subject and framework is static—very rarely does he attempt motion—yet the pictures are lively. They have a definite internal flow and rhythm that gives the spectator all the feeling of motion. Take, for example, the "Steam Shovel"; one's eye is carried around from the sharp staccato contrasts of light and dark in the center to the gentler and more scattered areas at the left and right. The static oblong masses of the caterpillar belts are pulled to the center by progressive accents underneath, and by the outline above the central belt. There is a concentration of interesting shapes and



HERMAN MARIL: ELLICOTT CITY BRIDGE (1929)

areas at the center; there is a lively weaving and repetition throughout the canvas that gives the effect of movement, although the actual subject is still.

The handling of the paint, too, adds to this life. It is not fluent or gracious, but its variety gives vitality; its certainty gives strength. Like the color the handling is restrained, spare, sometimes almost dry, but filled with subtleties of expression. Take the sky on the right, patterned with little white clouds, played off against the uneven lumps of earth on the left; the bony accents on the crane or truck; the uneven plaster spots on the house façade; the restless shadows moving across it; the stone suggesting cornice strokes; the variety and play of rectangles from the black cabin door to the reflecting panes on the right; the upward lift and gradual misty diffusion of the smoke, making a brown smudge against a sky quite differently atmospheric. The exactness and expression of these details help make this work interesting.

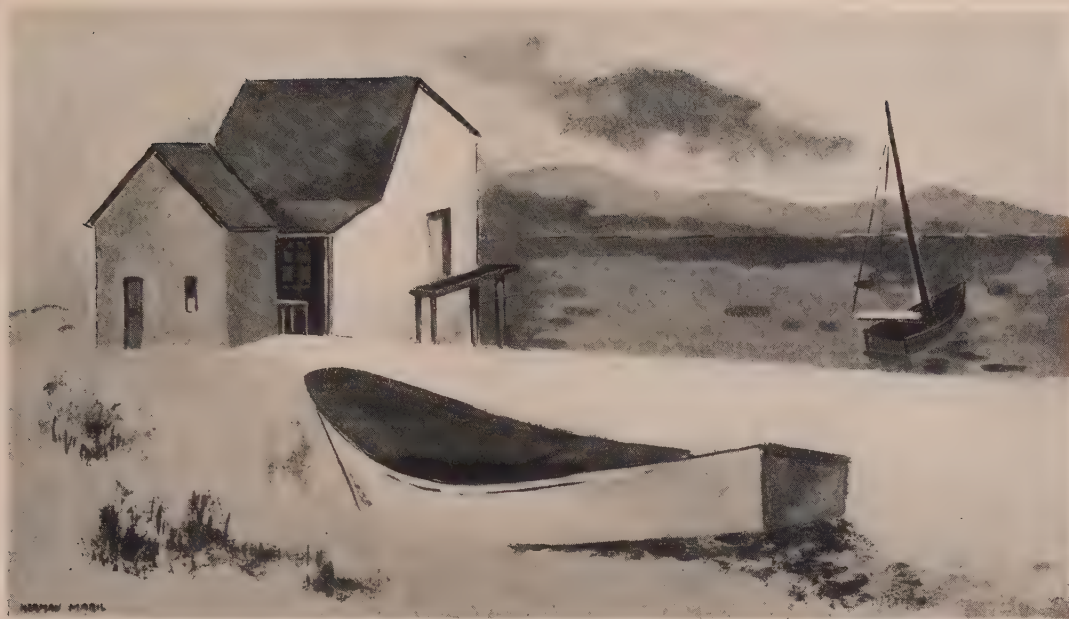
The fine distinctions that Maril uses in his handling he uses in his color too. The quality

of his palette is built up on exactness and subtlety of tone, on a careful juxtaposition of simple areas of color. He can force two similar colors to express quite different things. In a recent exhibition of his work three pictures distinct in mood hung on one wall. Yet the actual color of the three skies was almost identical. I do not mean that they were all blue—I mean that they were almost exactly the same grey-blue. Yet the first was a wet, misty twilight sky, the second was a sunny and brilliant sky, while the last was a heavy, dramatic, storm-clouded sky.

The difference in mood depends on the subtle adjustment of value and of invented and observed textures and contrasts. This is so well organized that Maril can give with one color the effect of sunlight and with the same tint the envelopment of twilight. This limited palette, thanks to his exactness, is more than sufficient to express what he wishes it to. Its reserves give his pictures unity. It is very personal.

In the interpretation of light this method is particularly successful. In these latest pic-





HERMAN MARIL: STAGE HARBOR (1934)

tures Maril often achieves a trembling quality of light, a bombardment of sun particles, a brilliant dancing of heat on sand or wood that is astonishing. In such a picture as "Stage Harbor" (shown last year in the Whitney Museum Biennial Exhibition) you have an original interpretation of light. The color and value is so exactly right, the placing of a few staccato strokes so well chosen that he gets, I think, more trembling atmospheric effects, more air, more sunlight than most of the pointillistes and broken colorists do. This restraint, both in palette and paint application has the added advantage of simplicity. One is not aware of the technique.

Herman Maril's painting is reserved, and like most good painting, it is simple. He is interested in the essentials. Each picture has its core; each is beautifully conceived and

organized; each is distinct in mood. He is careful and craftsmanlike whether he is painting a large oil or one of his charming and individual little gouaches. Unlike many moderns who use semi-abstraction Maril always achieves mood, whether his subject is a boat on sand, a tent under a stormy sky, a nude, two horses, or a band concert at night. Each picture is a distinct experience. The subject is "brought out." It is clothed in a certain poetry, a certain meaning that is essentially pictorial.

These sophisticated yet simple harmonies draw one's mind and imagination on; they make one improvise on their contours and colors. They grow in one's memory. The picture does not stop at the canvas, it stimulates creation in the observer. Only good pictures do this.

On Opposite Page

HERMAN MARIL: THREE MEN IN A BOAT

Circulated in a Traveling Exhibition of the American Federation of Arts



WINSLOW HOMER: THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC—A SHARPSHOOTER ON PICKET DUTY

From *Harper's Weekly*, November 15, 1862

WINSLOW HOMER'S EARLY ILLUSTRATIONS

By ALLEN WELLER

BETWEEN 1858 and 1875, Winslow Homer contributed over a hundred drawings to *Harper's Weekly*. This magazine, founded in 1857, proudly called itself "A Journal of Civilization," and on its cover listed its interests as follows: "Natural, Critical, Fashion, Science and Arts, International, Literature, Wit, History, Poetical." Originally it devoted itself primarily to literary, artistic, and social material. Works by Dickens, Trollope, Bulwer-Lytton, Wilkie Collins, and other English authors received their first American publication in its pages. The character of the periodical, however, was radically changed by the advent of the Civil War, when it naturally stressed political and military affairs, and this interest in public life was continued after the conflict in the campaign which it waged against Tammany Hall and the Tweed Ring. A study of the magazine yields valuable results in an understanding of the popular points of view of its

period, and one of the chief reasons for this characteristic is the richness of its illustrative material, which, while usually mediocre artistically and technically, is significant socially and historically. Of these illustrations, by far the finest are those which Winslow Homer contributed during the seventeen years of his association with the magazine.

The artistic superiority of Homer's drawings over most magazine illustrations of the mid-nineteenth century makes them an extraordinarily vivid and specific record of certain phases of the social history of the period, and in the study of the artist's own development, this early journalistic work increases very considerably our knowledge of his native artistic instincts and experiments. Even the poor reproductive method employed fails to destroy the effectiveness of the best of his designs, and the rather unfamiliar pre-marine Homer is revealed completely only in these wood-engravings. The illustrations are less



WINSLOW HOMER: HOLIDAY IN CAMP—SOLDIERS PLAYING “FOOTBALL”

From *Harper's Weekly*, July 15, 1865

well known than they deserve to be; the published lists of them are neither accurate nor complete; and it has been only in recent Homer exhibitions that a few examples of them have been included to represent this important early stage of his work. But the student of American art who will take the trouble to examine the files of *Harper's Weekly* will be rewarded by an introduction to a vigorous artistic personality who expresses himself at times crudely and without charm, but with a certain strength and sincerity that makes his work stand out against the usual mediocre commercial work of the eighteen-sixties and seventies.

Homer was twenty-two when his illustrations started to appear in *Harper's Weekly*. At this time he was still living in Boston, where he had been apprenticed to a lithographer three years previously; the following year he was to move to New York; his first paintings would not be exhibited until five years later. The drawings for the first three years of his connection with the magazine are numerous and varied: the usual seasonal

allegories, society in town and at the seashore, New England farm activities. They are overcrowded and confusing in detail, but as a rule free from the blatant sentimentality of the period. Even at this early time there is an incisiveness to his draughtsmanship and an effective suggestion of movement which make it easy to pick out his pictures from the crowded pages of the periodicals to which he contributed.

Homer's drawings were, of course, engraved by professional woodcutters; he seems, however, usually to have drawn directly upon the wood-block, so that the prints as they appear in the magazine must be at least accurate, if not always sensitive reproductions of his original designs. Consequently, it is quite legitimate to count these works as original Homers.

Homer's artistic maturity may be said to date from the Civil War. In 1861 he was appointed an artist-correspondent, and his magazine procured the necessary military passes so that he could live and travel with the Union Army. The war illustrations which



WINSLOW HOMER: A PARISIAN BALL—DANCING AT THE CASINO

From *Harper's Weekly*, November 23, 1867

resulted, about twenty-five in number, are without question the most remarkable pictorial record of the struggle which we have. They range all the way from portraits of Congressional leaders and war activities in Washington and New York to many pictures of Union soldiers at work and at play. It is symbolic of Homer's simplicity and straightforwardness that there is a minimum number of the usual magazine heroics—charges, hand-to-hand encounters, parades, and so on. Homer rather has presented the life of the soldier back of the lines, the episodes with which he himself came in contact and which are such a contrast to the superpatriotic propaganda of most artist-reporters.

One interesting example, "News from the War," June 14, 1862, includes, among a number of miscellaneous episodes, his own self-portrait—a serious, bearded young man of twenty-seven who, as "Our Special Artist," is sketching a row of lanky recruits standing at attention. But as a rule, Homer keeps his own feelings and his own personality severely in the background, showing the simple ob-

jectivity that was to distinguish his whole career. Such subjects as the surgeon at work at the rear during an engagement, payday in the Army of the Potomac, Thanksgiving Day in camp, and the songs of the war are frequent. They are direct and vigorous as narratives, and are without the exaggeration that it would have been easy for a less objective reporter to have introduced.

An outstanding example of the war series is "A Sharpshooter on Picket Duty," November 15, 1862. The large scale of the figure, the complete economy and directness of method, the exactness and realism of the judiciously chosen details, give the picture a certain intensity and monumentality that appear here for the first time in Homer's work. The label under the print says that it is "From a Painting by W. Homer, Esq." It must have been one of his very earliest paintings, and it would be interesting to know what has happened to it. Much of Homer's early work has vanished from the public eye, and the student who some day attempts to make a complete catalogue of his work will find it



WINSLOW HOMER: CHRISTMAS BELLES

From *Harper's Weekly*, January 2, 1869

difficult to track down his early paintings.

"Holiday in Camp—Soldiers Playing 'Football,'" July 15, 1865, shows the hearty boisterousness with which Homer interprets the events of camp life. The violence of the scene suggests that the artist was quite right, in naming his picture, to enclose the word football in quotation marks. Yet the picture betrays a consciousness of the compositional necessities in excess of earlier examples: a certain angular organization underlies the arrangement of the figures, a balance of forces creates a taut symmetry that gives formal as well as narrative quality to the work.

Homer spent ten months in Europe in 1867, apparently largely in Paris. He seems to have been singularly unaffected by this experience, and he certainly did none of the conventional things that young American artists of the mid-nineteenth century did do in Paris, studying with an academic painter or copying masterpieces in the Louvre. A few years before Hunt and LaFarge were students of Couture and Whistler of Glèyre; in the same year that Homer was in Paris, Eakins

was industriously working in the studio of Gérôme; a little later Sargent would be studying with Carolus Duran. But Homer, always the most independent and perhaps the most completely American artist of his generation, remained untouched by these academic contacts. One wonders what opportunity, if any, he had of becoming acquainted with the work of Courbet and Manet, for, while of a simpler and a narrower personality than either of these, he belongs to the same realistic strain that was remaking Western painting.

A few magazine contributions after his return home reflect some of Homer's foreign experiences. There is an amusing picture of art students copying in the Louvre, in which he is obviously much more interested in the copyists than in the masterpieces on the walls. There is an interesting picture of voyagers on an ocean liner, which is one of the first subjects connected with the sea from an artist who was later to become its unique interpreter. The plate called "A Parisian Ball—Dancing at the Casino," November 23, 1867, shows the vigorous simplification that Homer



WINSLOW HOMER: ON THE BLUFF AT LONG BEACH, AT THE BATHING HOUR

From *Harper's Weekly*, August 6, 1870

was experimenting with at this time: the picture is rich in clarity of pattern and in expressiveness of swinging outline, and unites with this quality a frank objectivity which gives us an interesting reflection of the scene itself and which is informative also of the young American who witnessed it. One would be glad to have more examples of this rather naïve picturization of society of the Second Empire, this outside view of it, to balance the work of Daumier and Guys.

One of the few definite exterior influences on Homer's artistic development seems to have come from this period, however, in the form of his interest in Japanese prints. He must have been one of the very earliest Western artists to show clearly a familiarity with Japanese art, as is shown by such a page as the "Saint Valentine's Day," February 22, 1868, in which a conventionally drawn Japanese couple stand out against the confused and miscellaneous detail of a typical seasonal allegory, in which field Homer inevitably shows up poorly in comparison to the fine narrative which is naturally his medium. Later refinements of spacing and proportion perhaps reflect this Japanese influence more

subtly, and indeed it is to be found in some of his masterpieces of twenty-five years later, like "The Fox Hunt."

Among the pictures for 1869 and the early seventies are many in which Homer records the more vigorous activities of New York society—skating, sleighing, riding in Central Park, and so on. Typical is "Christmas Belles," January 2, 1869, which, quite aside from the quaintness of types and costumes, has a rather fine feeling of movement and mass, and is among the most decorative of these works. Homer's figures are not characterized as individuals, but they are never mere fashion plates, and they have a physical energy and animation which makes us understand why he preferred sports to indoor parties.

About 1870, Homer started the series of illustrations of New England country life, which are among the notable achievements of his association with *Harper's Weekly*. These pictures show a distinct change from the earlier work: even in the medium of wood-engraving the artist is much more the painter, instead of merely the draughtsman he had formerly been. He is interested in problems of tone, space, and atmosphere, as well as

the sharp pattern and mass of the earlier examples. As in the Civil War pictures, he shows the importance and significance of everyday activities; there is in the simple scenes a complete lack of self-consciousness which is fresh and attractive. If Homer had not become engrossed in the marine subjects for which he is chiefly remembered, it is easy to believe that his later painting might have developed out of this kind of work, and that he might have become a sort of New England Millet, of a more objective and realistic type.

Farmers making hay or grafting, farmers' wives blowing the dinner horn at noon, the country school, the active games of country boys—these and similar themes are expressed with a simple delight in straightforward narrative, a fine sense of scale, a rather surprising individuality, and a freedom and spaciousness which quite transcend the bounds of magazine illustration of the period. Homer will later have many technical difficulties to struggle with, but his artistic ideas as ideas are completely realized from this period on.

At the same time that J. G. Brown and his

like were making their revoltingly sentimental pictures of boyhood, Homer's New England scenes were revealing a sympathetic understanding of youth. "The Nooning," August 16, 1873, with its rather remarkable suggestion of sunlight and space; its feeling of repose and quiet, which are carried out in the arrangement of the whole picture as well as merely in the foreground figures, is a good example of Homer's unostentatious participation in youthful emotions. There is a frank and engaging poetry about such work that gives it charm and grace. The figures no longer stand out sharply against a background, but are part of a scene which is realized atmospherically as a whole. Possibly these tonal works are less suitable as wood-engravings than the harsher, more linear early prints—Homer is obviously more and more engrossed in the problems of the painter—but they indicate the direction of his artistic evolution very clearly.

It is interesting that Homer, whom we think of almost exclusively as a marine

(Continued on page 448)



WINSLOW HOMER: THE NOONING

From *Harper's Weekly*, August 16, 1873



MONSTER HEAD; FRAGMENT FROM ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTATION COPAN.
SOUTHERN STYLE; COURTESY AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

MAYAN ART

By JEAN CHARLOT

THE study of Mayan art and the appreciation of its monuments has been left wholly to the taste of scientists, and those precise gentlemen, being mostly interested in chronology, too often overlook its beauty to indulge in technical discussions which make the layman yawn. This may account for the fact that Mayan art, although one of the few fully ripe racial expressions the world has known, is still waiting to become a part of our common aesthetic heritage.

Mayan art appears more and more as a purely autochthonous growth. The much heralded Chinese or Siamese resemblances fade away as our knowledge of its style increases and its purely American characteristics are made clear. Even the die-hard fairy tale of the Mayans' being a survival of the lost Atlantis tribes is less in clash with the facts, the close connection between the art, the race, and its geographical environment, than the more commonplace theory of an Asiatic importation.

The layman tends to regard this art as just another of our many American tribal expressions. He does so with the paternal condescension with which the civilized appreciates any savage culture, since Parisian aesthetes

started the Negro art fad. But on the contrary, if one possesses an aesthetic flair and a sense of the fitness of respect, one will approach Mayan art much in the same way that a learned Occidental studies Chinese ink paintings or Japanese poetry, considering it as something more subtle than the similar products of our own present-day era.

Its stylistic cycle follows the universal scheme. It started from archaic forms to culminate in a genuine classical purity, then, through the overripe excesses of baroque, vanished together with the civilization that had given it growth. Just before the end, a reaction of purism or neo-archaism gave birth to some of its most exquisite monuments.

A choice between the diversified wealth of its remains is mostly a question of taste, and taste is a very personal affair. Here again the archaeologist, innocent of aesthetic training, looms as dictator, and the public, taking his word for granted, knows and admires most the monuments typical of later rococo times. Lovers of virtuosity for its own sake, can well take pride in the decadent *dentelles de pierre* of Quirigua and in the late works of other sites, all of them unsurpassed in the history of monumental sculpture for their confusing



THE SOWER DETAIL FROM A STELA IN PIEDRAS NEGRAS
A masterpiece of classical restraint. Courtesy Dr Morley, Carnegie Institution of Washington



MONOLITH KNOWN AS THE GREAT TURTLE, QUIRIGUA

An animal representation showing the abstract-baroque style at its best. Southern style. Courtesy American Museum of Natural History.

amount of carefully worked details. Through decorative spirals, volutes, and curves, men, animals, monsters and gods intertwine their bodies in competition with the surrounding tropical exuberance. By a sort of artificial mimetism, chunks of stone are made to look like corners of a jungle. Let the imagination surround them again with hordes of chieftains and priests in heavily embroidered gowns with their god-masks, weapons, and ceremonial staffs, and you will not fail to enthuse both theatrical managers and "nouveaux riches." Here indeed were splendors that put to shame even a Roxy.

But Mayan life and Mayan thought were not only this gorgeous pageantry. Their classical manifestations are less luxurious but wealthier in human values. A sober taste guided the authors of the "Beau Relief" of Palenque, and some eight hundred years later the fresco painters of Chacmultun and Chichen Itza. On plain backgrounds, personages clad in peplum-like garments move

with elegant, over-refined gestures, their slim bodies elongated to the utmost. The artist, as the Greeks had done before him, attempts to summarize his philosophy in the choice proportions of the male form, and stakes all on the human body. But in these works palpitates a spirituality that clashes with the Greek athletic ideal that gave such a rustic health to both men and gods. The quasi-morbid attitude that those reliefs immortalize is still the appanage of modern Mayans. How such languid-looking adolescents were able to build and to keep in working order the complex machinery of their civilization is more understandable for those who have seen Mayan masons lift with lazy gesture, and carry on their heads, weights under which one of our strong men would stagger. In the whole field of Mayan monuments, this group of art works stands the closest to us, being endowed with a psychological flavor that links it closely to our own anthropomorphic habits of thought.

But in the Mayan scheme of things, man was far from playing the dominant role. He was a well-nigh useless addition to a universe in which planets, stars, and an innumerable and complex host of gods moved in orderly fashion. To live his life without crossing the way of those mysterious beings was man's main concern. Hence the priest controlled all. The metaphysical subjects proposed by the priesthood to the hired artist were, by a happy accident or a racial affinity, exactly those that befitted his gift. The Mayan artist was most interested in abstractions. The use of line, volume, and color for non-descriptive, highly intellectualized purpose, was as natural with him as an objective fidelity is to the camera. As a result, this art stands as one of the wealthiest mines of theological motives and plastic abstractions the world has ever known.

The simplest and presumably oldest forms of human representation (stela 8, Naranjo) are realistic, with a trend to caricature. The conception, however, soon widens with the growing ability and ambition of the stone worker. The representation loses its naturalistic appearance, anatomical proportions become distorted, and the wealth of complicated garments and ceremonial ornaments climbs, vine-like, over the human figure, humbling it to the role of a mere peg for symbols. The features remain visible for a time, as the last objective spot amidst this wealth of abstractions, then disappear in turn under a fantastic mask, thus depriving us, the modern onlookers, of even this last refuge for our too strictly emotional appreciation of art. Thus the typical Maya monolith was an encyclopaedia of dogmatic knowledge. Once an accumulator for religious energies, it is now,



FRAGMENT OF BAS RELIEF FROM YAXCHILAN; SOUTHERN STYLE

The photograph, taken in a strongly diagonal light, emphasizes the relief that is in reality very low. An elaborate polychrome was an essential part of such technique. Courtesy American Museum of Natural History.

with its meaning mainly lost, still a foyer of plastic ardor.

That a process of depuration modified natural forms into a highly divergent pattern is in many cases evident, the link being as brittle as that between a Picasso picture and a guitar. But another group of art forms must have been born directly from the mind of their makers. Theirs is a more radically abstract language than any of those used by modern artists, and baffling indeed for the



JEAN CHARLOT: SKETCH OF TERRA COTTA STATUETTE

This piece is six inches high, from the island of Jaina. It typifies the Mayan ideal of human beauty. Similar modeling technique was applied to monumental art (stucco reliefs at Palenque). James Collection, Merida

scientist who attempts to pin down some objective model from which such symbols could evolve. One of two groups of equally serious explorers saw a parrot in a detail of stela B, at Copan, the other group, an elephant!

An individual may create a new pot shape or decorate a vase for his own egotistic satisfaction. But the impulse that gave birth to the temples and major sculptures of the Mayas was the collective urge that seizes whole crowds and makes them build as one, be they Athenian Greeks or Gothic Frenchmen. This social art, now that its society has vanished, remains in an enforced idleness

amidst its jungle surroundings. As a modern recognition of its utilitarian origin, Indian hunters still make sacrifices of deer and burn copal in wooden spoons at the feet of the carved stelae. Even the white man recognizes dimly that no purely aesthetic appreciation will do it full justice. He tries to complete the picture by scanning the other remains of this civilization, tries to read its written text and discover the spring that caused those monuments to surge as an answer to the need of the people. About a fifth of their hieroglyphics have by now been deciphered, but most of these texts happen to be merely arithmetic, dealing with astronomical computations, the movements of the sun, the moon, and the planets. This very lack of sought-for sentimental corollaries is illuminating. The backbone of the art, the mental scaffolding the Maya priesthood offered to the artist so that he could clothe it with his own aesthetic passion, is mathematical. Numbers, being measure and rhythm, are poetry in a sense, but poetry accessible only to a few. In order to attract crowds it must be clad in less metaphysical garments. This was the role incumbent upon the Mayan artists, sculptors, modelers, and painters. They made this dry, if noble, dogma partake of the richness of the landscape, yet not following it in its disorder, but creating a human tropic of new shapes and meanings. Stela 11, in Yaxchilan, perhaps the most impressive conception ever attempted in sculpture, shows that the artist fully understands his rôle; here trembling worshippers kneel before a shrine. A miracle happens and the god appears, a frightful god indeed. Behind the divine mask magnificently carved, the artist reveals to us, and to us only, the profile of the priest who impersonates the god. He is a dry, shrewd, scientific person, wholly disdainful of the tremendous sensation that his disguise creates.

The more plebeian art objects are teeming with a wealth of grinning gods, old gods, black gods, and even among them the ambiguous beauty of the Maize God. Thus did the artist grind food for popular sentimentality, something to cling to when one ignores mathematics and yet needs a faith and a morale.



STELA 11, YAXCHILAN. SOUTHERN STYLE

The top of the monolith is broken. Courtesy American Museum of Natural History

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

VI: WOODCUT

By FISKE BOYD

BY THE term "woodcut" I mean the process of reproducing a picture upon paper by printing it from a woodblock from the surface of which the non-printing or white spaces of the composition have been removed.

Generally speaking, it is historically identified in its inception with the invention of primitive printing in Europe in the fifteenth century. Following the fall of Mainz in 1462, the German printers carried their printing-presses with them as they passed from city to city in western Europe. By the turn of the century a countless flood of books and broadsheets had issued from the presses. The woodblocks of pictures were set beside those of initials and text to print the often beautiful and interesting pages which we now know as rare specimens.

Woodcut belongs to the surface-printing family and prints the same way as type. Characteristic are the starkness of its effects and

the fact that its subtleties must necessarily be conveyed through graphic elements capable of relatively scant compromise. Like other art forms, it is usually at its best when the austere, simple limitations are frankly recognized.

As here considered, woodcut is fashioned in the smooth surface of a board sawn in the ordinary way parallel with the grain. This was the original method universally practiced until shortly before 1775. In that year, however, Thomas Bewick, English engraver, using a novel technique of engraving upon wood recently introduced in France, won the Grand Prize awarded by the London Society of Arts for the best engraving on wood. The block used by Bewick was sawn across the log in such wise that the grain of the wood was disposed perpendicular to the printing surface. This innovation, sometimes called more specifically "wood-engraving" (to distinguish it from the original method or woodcut), made possible the use of the burin, a tool hitherto



FISKE BOYD: THE GOBLET

At the left a proof pulled after the preliminary cutting away of the white had been done; at the right an impression of the regular edition

used only by the engravers on metal. Papillon, the French engraver, was moved to declare, in his *Treatise* published in 1766, that the new engraving on the end-grain of the wood was impossible because it would be confused with engraving on metal. His observation doubtless contained a moiety of significance, but it proved unreliable as a prediction. The relative fluency in cutting curved lines in wood gained by the use of the burin on the end-grain did lead quickly to the prevalent use of the newer method—and eventually to its increasingly widespread adaptation to technical and commercial uses, until the introduction of photo-engraving displaced it. Woodcut was then left entirely in the hands of the artists, to be used by them in both its forms as a vehicle for purely aesthetic adventuring.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

For the thesis of our exposition, we choose the original woodcut process in black and white as best exemplifying the fundamental principle.

Making a woodcut is the process of removing portions of the smooth surface of the block so that it is interrupted by a pictorial pattern of non-printing or white spaces. A picture can then be transferred, or pressed off in ink upon paper, from the remaining, undisturbed surface of the woodblock. The blacks and whites thus eventually produced react together in the print to reproduce the pictorial composition. It should be noted that the non-printing white spaces need only be cut to a depth approaching an eighth of an inch—except in the case of a larger area, which may go as deep as a quarter of an inch.

Papillon named as the woods to be used in engraving: *cormier*, *poirier*, and *cerisier*. Probably any wood can be used for the process. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* lists the following as available, *viz.*: beech, apple, pear, cherry, sycamore, whitewood. I would add to this teak and walnut, but I found pine difficult to manage. The artist will soon recognize his preferences. The board can be dressed to the convenient type-height of seven-eighths of an inch and may be planed and sanded to a smooth finish.

Being both designer and executant, the

modern artist is at liberty to develop the designing of his pictorial composition with complete freedom as the cutting progresses. He embarks, presumably, upon an expressive adventure to find what he can of aesthetic experience. Not only is he engaged in composing and executing a picture in stark white and black, but he is also vitally interested in exploiting the peculiar graphic qualities latent in the woodcut. The artist can return, after each new venture achieved in cutting the block, to a fresh consideration of the merits of the design as a whole. The process of cutting the woodblock, can remain elastic, an affair of vital growth, until the precise minute when the composition is felt to be complete and all its separate movements are seen drawn together in unity.

THE CARTOON

It is possible to work directly upon the wood without a design prepared, or begun, in advance; but it is very convenient to prepare, upon thin but tough opaque paper such as Barcelona, a drawing of the same size as the print which one expects to produce. It is not necessary, indeed it may be considered undesirable, to attempt a prevision in full black and white of the ultimate print. A pencil line drawing to determine the general disposition of the spaces, with the exact contours of a few details which can be cut at once, is rather what I have in mind for a design, pattern, or cartoon, to serve as a guide with which to begin the cutting of the woodblock.

In order to use this design, or cartoon, over and over again, returning it as a transfer pattern to the block, two opposite corners of the paper should be trimmed sharp with scissors. The pattern being then superimposed upon the woodblock in the position to be occupied by the cutting, the locations of the trimmed corners of the paper are accurately marked and incised on the face of the block, so that the paper bearing the design can be removed and returned to exactly the same location. As the work on the woodblock progresses, new devices are invented and studied out on the cartoon and then transferred to their proper places on the block.

The pattern can be returned for as many subsequent transferrings of white details as may be required.

The back of the pattern paper can be "carboned" by rubbing it with *conté* crayon. When the pattern, or cartoon, is located on the woodblock, details can be transferred by drawing with a stylus on the paper with sufficient pressure to impress the lines in *conté* crayon on the block. Otherwise, if the paper is not carboned, the lines can be drawn with the stylus, through the cartoon, on the surface of the block; the resulting slight indentation in the wood can be readily followed by the eye in cutting.

CUTTING

The tool which I have found most convenient for woodcutting is a double-edged razor-blade set in a holder, obtainable at hardware stores. Each of the four corners of the blade (which has perhaps already shaved the artist's face) serves successively as the executive part of the instrument, until all the corners lose their sharpness. The use of this instrument eliminates the trouble of sharpening tools, since razor-blades are plentiful and can be replaced with extreme ease.

The operation of cutting is performed by making two parallel incisions in the face of the block. The instrument is held pencil-wise in the hand, except that the forefinger exerts a downward pressure. The two incisions meet, or almost meet, beneath the surface, and the V- or spreading U-shaped chip comes out, producing a non-printing or white line excavated from the printing surface of the woodblock. A woodcarver's gouge can be used to remove the surface of a large white area after it has been outlined in this manner.

The frame of the pictorial composition may very well be executed first. Outside the frame, a white margin of at least one-half inch should be cleared away on all sides. At this point the artist should decide whether to allow the blacks near the frame to connect with its inner member or to separate them therefrom by cutting in the beginning an inner white line all around.

Perhaps the simplest of the various print

techniques, the woodcut possesses, as its outstanding qualification, what may be at once a severe limitation and a great advantage: it presents its practitioners with the elementary problems of composition in stark black and white without the interposition of actual half-tones. It is true that half-tones may be approximated with a brilliantly vibrant effect by cutting a series of parallel white lines, or by leaving a series of parallel black ones. This device, called hatching, and even cross-hatching—which results in an area of black dots—can be introduced in the composition for the purpose of tonal modulation.

Close-clustered black marks, quirks, jigs, dots, pot-hooks, wedges, and dashes in a larger white space also produce a dazzling sort of crude halftone. In practice, a great variety of colorative and accentual qualities can be achieved between masses of black and white on either hand. And these very extremes themselves, the mass of white and the mass of black, can be infinitely varied in their intention and effect by managing their extent and weight and character of contour.

To begin the execution of the picture, certain details may be selected from the design, suiting the artist's fancy for whites, whether they be sky, clouds, high-lights, or fence-posts, and these can be transferred from the pattern paper to the woodblock and cut. This done, the pattern, or cartoon, is replaced upon its marks, and the next group of whites is chosen and transferred for cutting. And so on. The adventure is under way. More and more white details are cut from the remaining black printing surface.

Whiting or powdered chalk may be rubbed over the block and polished with the palm of the hand, more being added and polished after each new cutting, so that the hollows are all filled with white chalk. The effect of the composition is revealed at any stage by the whiting, approximately as if the woodblock were printed. The printing surface of the block, representing the blacks, eventually becomes polished very smooth.

After each additional group of details has been cut, the design can be studied anew and further developed on the pattern paper. In resolving the design into its composition in

the white and black medium of woodcut, there are four principles upon which the artist may play. These are: black line, white line, black masses, and white masses. The culmination of these principles may be envisioned as occurring when an area exists in the composition in which whites emerge from black, placed in dramatic contrast with an area where blacks are isolated in white. This can be a very powerful device. The work of cutting in, and transferring, more details from the pattern is continued until the pictorial composition feels complete, fulfilling the purpose of the artist.

He is, of course, constantly on the watch for inspirational ideas for things to be done directly upon the block in conjunction with the program mapped out in the cartoon, which would, again, influence—perhaps radically—the working out of the composition in mid-course. And in transferring through the pattern or cartoon with the stylus, the eye of the mind is ever on the alert, watching and helping the pictorial composition grow as a whole toward realization and unity. Indeed, woodcut may be considered as a sort of lower court wherein many of the major problems of painting can be tried in small.

INKING THE BLOCK

When the artist wishes to see the proof of a given state of the picture, in course of its composition, in the full brilliance of black ink on white paper, he may take a trial print or proof.

The woodblock is brushed clear of the whiting and wiped with a clean rag. A gob of fresh black printer's ink is put out on a sheet of glass and rolled with a rubber hand roller, called by printers a brayer, until the ink is evenly spread on the glass. Printer's ink of a good grade of job black can be had from a local print shop and is best kept in a small, airtight can holding one pound of ink. As it is used up, a piece of oiled paper is kept pressed down on the ink in the can to keep it from drying and forming a hard crust. Printing ink has a viscous quality and makes a tacky noise when it is rolled back and forth. The ink must be rolled on the glass until the roller is evenly and fully charged and

all lumps disappear. The inked roller is then applied to the face of the block which is rolled over and over, back and forth, first on one diagonal then on the other, care being taken to cover the corners, until the entire face of the woodblock is uniformly inked. The amount of ink on the block, whether it be heavily inked for a full, rich, black impression, or lightly for a delicate print (which will probably reveal the pattern of the wood-grain running through the blacks), is regulated in a general way by putting out more or less ink on the glass to begin with. The degree of thickness or richness with which the block is inked will be roughly proportionate to the thickness of the ink supply when it is rolled out smoothly upon the glass. The printing surface of the woodblock takes the ink evenly from the hand roller or brayer. The woodblock should not be inked so heavily that narrow white lines become filled.

"PULLING" PROOF OR PRINT

The best paper I have found for use in the method here described of printing with a spoon is the kind called Japanese rice paper, and in especial the soft, porous paper known as *gifu*. The paper must not be dampened for spoon-printing; and it should be noted that the *gifu* does not endure rubbing. A sheet of paper, cut so as to provide a margin of one inch or more outside the print, is then laid upon the inked face of the block. The design remaining in the original surface of the woodblock, after the removal of the whites, can now be pressed off upon the paper.

A brick-shaped block of maple, bottomed with felt and having in the center of its top a leather saddle, is then placed upon the paper, and a sharp, moderate blow struck with a hammer upon the saddle. The block is shifted lightly and deftly, another blow struck, and so on until the entire printing paper is set on the woodblock and tamped. The tack, or stickiness, of the ink will now hold the paper firmly and prevent its shifting while the spooning is being done. It was for this particular reason that we used the soft, unglazed paper in a dry state and the tacky printer's ink. After the paper has been tamped upon the woodblock the picture will



FISKE BOYD: EVENING INTERIOR

show through with sufficient clearness to guide us in the spooning.

In printing, the paper is pressed against the block and the ink transferred to it by pressure, while the paper remains free and clean over the non-printing white spaces. Tamping with the maple block can produce a very light print if the woodblock is mounted on a heavy, firm base and the maple block is struck harder blows with the hammer. Printing a woodcut in full, rich black at a single pressing requires a great amount of pressure. For exerting this at one stroke a flat-bed Washington hand press is needed. This is the modern equivalent of the printing press used by mediaeval printers. The principle is the same. But a press of this kind is an expensive and unwieldy affair to acquire and maintain.

The spooning method is an alternative expedient which is practicable and efficient. By applying a moderate pressure to a small spot at a time, we get in the end the amount of pressure necessary to make the full-inked transfer. A serving spoon of silver or a large aluminum kitchen spoon is our printing press—if you please! We grasp it firmly, the fingers pointing down toward the bowl which touches the paper at a place near its point. A sensitive pressure is then exerted while the spoon is moved over the blacks with a bur-nishing motion. Take care to print the very edges of the blacks sharply, without charging off into the void. If the spoon is inadvertently allowed to slip off into a large white space, the paper will be permanently dented, the print spoiled, the edge of the wood depressed somewhat, and its contour dulled.

The spooning finished, the proof or print is pulled by picking up one corner of the paper, and scanning the print carefully as it is peeled off the block to make sure that all parts of the picture have been printed satisfactorily. If it is found, before entirely lifting the paper from the woodblock, that some portion of the print has not received sufficient pressure, that much of the proof can be laid down again on the block and spooned over. When it is pulled, the print should be laid aside to dry for a day, and the block thoroughly cleaned. A generous puddle of turpentine is poured on the block which is then

scrubbed with a soft brush to dissolve all the ink left on it. The block is then mopped off with a rag, and is left flat to dry. A point of casual interest, which may be mentioned here, is that the woodblock itself, when impregnated with ink by successive turpentine washes, gains a lustrous, black patina which often gives it the appearance of an antique panel of woodcarving.

If whiting is subsequently applied to the block, it should be done only when the wood is thoroughly dry after having been washed with turpentine. After the woodblock has been blackened by turpentine and ink, the use of whiting reveals the state of the block even more effectively than before.

Following the trial proof, more work can be done on the block, and successive trials printed until it is finished.

It is easier to cut away than to replace the printing surface. If the artist wishes to make a correction as the cutting progresses, having perhaps cut away too much, it is possible to replace part of the surface by drilling out and setting in a fresh piece of wood. Smaller corrections can be dealt with by filling in with plastic wood or white lead.

EDITION

In his *Treatise*, Papillon answered long ago the inevitable question as to how many prints can be made from a block, by the boast that a half million proofs were struck, without signs of wear, from one of his *fleurons* which was cut in a boxwood board. Strangely enough, the broadsheets of Papillon's time, printed in great editions as they were, are today exceedingly rare collectors' items. The spooning method of printing is likely, however, to wear the woodblock sooner than would be the case with press-printing. And probably one kind of wood is not quite so durable as another. Nevertheless, this assurance should amply cover any requirements likely to arise in this respect.

This is a simple process. But it can be considered a key to the various special ramifications of woodcut. It is their main stem, and any one of them will be comprehended readily by the artist who has experimented along these lines.



MODERN ORNAMENT BY MAX HAGENDORN

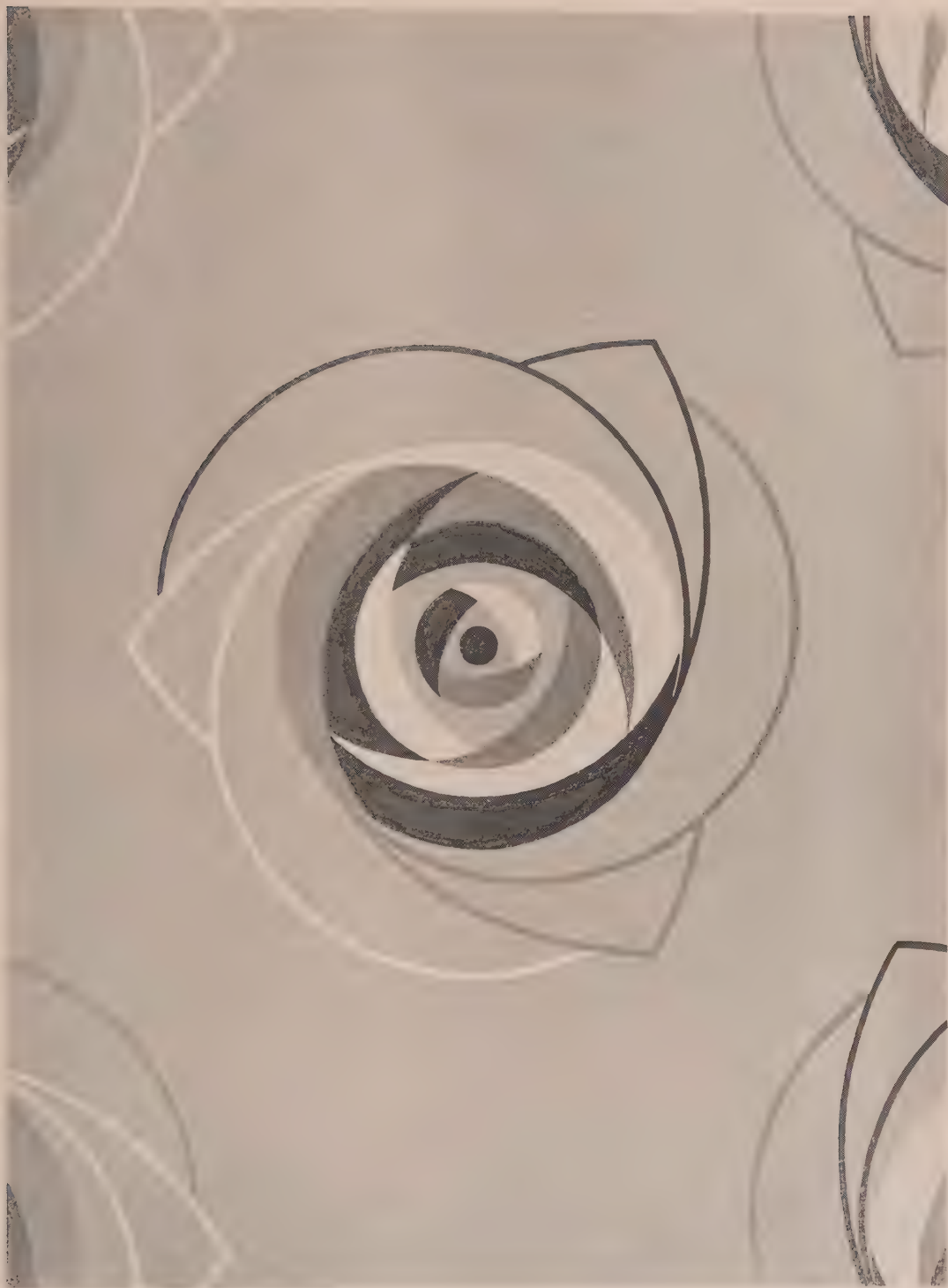
By JOHN EVERETT LERCH

LE CORBUSIER writes, "*L'art décoratif moderne n'a pas de décor.*" But the ornamentalist, like Alice in Wonderland, heeds not the cry "Off with his head," and continues to experiment creatively with his own particular mode of art, about which architects know very little as a rule. Of his own accord, such a designer as Max Hagendorn has put aside the conventionalized forms of animals, flowers, and fruits, and also the time-worn elegancies of classic decoration. Too, the barbaric pot-hooks of primitive art and the naive scrawls of childish drawing—modes fashionably current—are strictly shunned as being inappropriate to civilization. For the purpose of obtaining something vital, yet natural, he prefers to rely upon the formal possibilities inherent in the very instruments of draughting. The designs achieved through such an unimpeded exercise of learned principles of design, reveal a suave integrity that makes

this abstract ornament emotionally and artistically impressive.

The most obvious characteristic of the new style is variety. An element of design, such as the spiral or the star, proves to have an infinite number of appearances comparable only to the fecundity of the kaleidoscope. It is this variable trait which severs all relations with historical pattern. Perfection in classic decoration demanded at all times an approximation of the norm for both abstract shapes and those derived from nature. The ideal version of a type was sought. An element could not have an infinite number of forms, each so strongly characterized that the interest was as much in the individual appearance as in the general fundamental shape. This restraint over creative power has at last been overthrown, far more by necessity than by daring originality.

Historical ornament does not please because





Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

it is no longer completely truthful. As art, it cannot align itself with the state of the modern mind, tuned as it is to conceptions of forces almost sentient through their rhythmic movements, yet because of their very nature unperceivable. Visible nature now awakes little concern. Instead of being content with the obvious zigzag of lightning which a child can draw, notions of electricity fill the contemporary mind. The ideas of other universal energies are equally irresistible.

Introspection, either scientific or aesthetic, tends toward sensitiveness. And the artistic abstractions of Mr. Hagendorn have extraordinarily sensitive rhythms. Their delicate integrations imply that a complete subjugation of the senses permits his mind to retire to its inmost corner and there to mull over colors and forms without suffering the intrusion of the original objects or ideas which once occasioned them. In the practice of his art, Mr. Hagendorn steers a steady course, never deviating a jot from the fundamental principles of inspired creative design.

To use knowledge artistically, one must feel it. Once conceived imaginatively, the motif must develop in its own natural way by alternating and inverting the specific units, repeating or opposing them, gradually supplementing them with new turns for further complexity until the entire area attracts the eye with the proper balance that characterizes the design. Only from the rapport between the artist and his design can be developed any rhythmic life. Thus it is not only Mr. Hagendorn's manual dexterity but his mental grasp or process of memory, such as the Oriental artist knows, that forms and invigorates the vital lines of his style.

And designs conceived sensuously never can come directly from science, even from the drawings of mathematics. Mr. Hagendorn may understand the new theories of related

time, space, and matter, but he would never declare that his designs are aesthetic renderings of objects in motion in space. His only desire is that they possess the modern epoch's own rhythms and abstractions.

The dynamic color of the twentieth century assists this energetic draughtsmanship. Mr. Hagendorn ably uses all the customary methods of producing tonal balances of juxtaposed areas. There are sequences of color repeated without change in value or intensity. Or one color yields an interesting number of repetitions in its light, medium, and dark values. Sometimes the colors are made to vary their intensities by the addition of black. But the artist achieves the most striking effects by the enhanced vibration resulting from certain associations of colors. This phenomenon emotionally accentuates the rhythms of the interlocked forms made of now widening, now thinning lines. From the handling of line and color in this peculiar way, the figures seem to move spatially in a counterpoint of their own. They are ever ready to present a new view of themselves to the spectator. This dynamism is akin to the physical world as modern man knows it, an involved relationship of forces.

Whatever has been the inspiration, this radiant ornament is suited for contemporary use by its very style. The nonillustrative, yet colorful and vital patterns do not rebel against unnatural, manufactured materials such as the patented metallic alloys and the artificial tissues used in place of plants and minerals. In fact, their harmonies demand the scope of the scientific dye-pot, upon which these fabrications depend for color. Moreover, the angles and arcs of abstract design are not injured by mechanical reproduction, that process deadly to historical styles. Hence ornament as true to its age as this is, contains the seed of endless formal inspiration.

SPEAKING ABOUT ART

By PHILIPPA WHITING

American

THE FORTY-SECOND ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN ART was recently held at the Cincinnati Art Museum. There were more entries and more works were selected by the jury. The Museum tells us that the exhibition is a cross-section, that many new names appear, to take their places beside those whose achievement has been acknowledged in the past, that the American scene, which was insistent last year, "is subordinated to its proper place," and that valuable lessons learned from foreign schools are being applied to American material. Local critics, we understand, while interested in the Middle Westerners, Benton, Curry, and Wood, and in such painters as Franklin C. Watkins and Eilshemius, are more deeply moved by "the evidences of good painting seen in such accomplished artists as Alexander Brook . . . Nicolai Cikovsky . . . Harry Gottlieb, Henry Lee McFee, Henry Varnum Poor, or Raphael Soyer."

* * *

TOLEDO'S Twenty-second Annual, to be shown until August twenty-fifth, was personally selected by the President of the Museum from the year's big exhibitions and from dealers, museums, and artists. The show is not a cross-section, "the ultra-modern school having been purposely excluded," but the paintings "exhibit a vigor, freshness, and in many cases originality which mark them as distinctly modern." Mentioned are: Cikovsky, Harry Watrous, Sidney Laufman, Grant Wood, Alexander Brook, Benton, Burchfield, Curry, Du Bois, Glackens, Hopper, Kantor, Karfiol, Jonas Lie, Speicher, Sterne, and so forth.

* * *

THE PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM OF ART will install a summer show of American paintings from its permanent collection, to emphasize the Museum's growing strength in "the art of our own day and region." Works owned by the Museum will be supplemented

by paintings produced by younger Philadelphians, lent to the Museum under Federal and State art projects.

* * *

THE CONTEMPORARY collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gets larger month by month. Most recent acquisition is "Anna" by Eugene Speicher, completed during the past year, and purchased from the Rehn Gallery in New York. A flower study, "Cynararia and New York Times," by the British painter, E. Barnard Lintott, has been presented to the Museum.

* * *

NICOLAI CIKOVSKY has been engaged as instructor in painting classes at the Art Academy of Cincinnati, for 1935-36. Cikovsky was born and trained in Russia but has long been a naturalized citizen of the United States. He has received a number of important awards and is represented in museums throughout the country.



NICOLAI CIKOVSKY

Will teach painting at Cincinnati

C. P. M.

THE CLEVELAND PRINT MAKERS ANNUAL publication has just arrived, well written and well illustrated. Geoffrey Archbold is editor. The history of the organization's activities is told briefly—exhibitions, publications, the Print-a-Month plan, the new gallery in Dunham Tavern, experiments in new processes, rug design, participation in Cleveland projects, out-of-town showings. The account closes with the paragraph:



THERESA A. SCHMOTZER: ELSA
Drypoint. Frontispiece of *C.P.M. Annual*

"In more prosperous days the organization's Projects might have been more extensive, more obviously successful, more spectacular; that CPM has weathered a long period of economic stress has been due to a policy of administration based on strictest expediency. The average business failure attracts little attention, but when an artist goes broke the cry of 'impractical dreamer' is raised. May we point out that CPM—the 'irresponsible artists' is still solvent?"

Germany Sharpens Her Noblest Weapon

I KNOW at least a dozen people who are off to Germany this summer because they are curious as to what is really going on. I wish that before they went I could have put in their hands the little booklet which has recently been put in mine. But perhaps they know all about the Temple of German Art—perhaps the whole world has known about it but me. The booklet is printed in English and is addressed to Anglo-Saxons. Since it was mailed to us in America, I assume that it is Herr Hitler's way of paying us the highest compliment in his power.

The booklet gets under way with the simple words:

"We call upon our artists to wield the noblest weapon in the defense of the German people: German Art!—ADOLF HITLER." It continues with a lyrical rhapsody on Munich, the lucky city chosen to receive the Temple. It is a shame not to quote this poem in full; it first paints a rather bleak picture of the uninhabited ice age, and then, "There loometh after eons numberless . . . A city blest by God . . ."

"Ah, City of Delight, thou Home of Art
And Human Kindliness, art home to me
Though far I roam from thee, though never-
more

My eyes behold thy comely symmetry:
For where my heart is, there my home must
be!"

After this graceful bow to the Muse, the text proceeds on a note of seriousness:

" . . . Art is the sanctuary of a people's soul, for only art with unmistakable clearness reveals the depth or shallowness, unveils the sincerity or faithlessness of humanity, discloses the import or worthlessness of human endeavors. Thus the art productions of a people are the criterion according to which the vitality of a people can be judged, the instrument by means of which its vigor can be tested: art is the 'breath of a nation's nostrils.' The German people, after a frightful period of fratricidal struggle which well-nigh broke its national heart, has succeeded in recovering its

“... ONLY ART WITH UNMISTAKABLE CLEARNESS . . . DISCLOSES



“ . . . symbol of
this indomitable
will . . . ”

© Franz Hanfstaengel

FRANZ VON STUCK: FAUNS AND HE-GOAT
TEMPLE OF GERMAN ART, MUNICH

political union. Its art productions during these years of mutual hatred, of pernicious influence of malign powers seeking wholly to destroy what centuries of cultural activity had constructed, what two thousand years of Christian influence had yielded—these art productions were largely not germane to the true national spirit of Germany. It was a false art and its tools were in the hands of mocking and contemptuous defamers of virtue and truth. The German hope for a renaissance of German probity had almost vanished and the longing, racially anchored in the German soul: ever to be in tune with the creator of the world, ever to be conscious of the beauties of His world and to draw from them happiness and vitality—seemed to be no more.

“But, in spite of the many signs of decline, the core of the people’s heart was not corrupt: at the clarion call of one who united within himself in highest potency all the noble characteristics of his race, the people rose and shook off the destructive menace of impending corruption and demoralization. . . .”

DETAIL OF THE CRUCIFIX IN BRAUN-
SCHWEIG CATHEDRAL, 1160
From *Deutsche Kunst*



MATTHIAS
GRÜNEWALD:
RESURRECTION,
ISENHEIM ALTAR,
KOLMAR

From *Deutsche Kunst*



“what two
thousand
years of
Christian
influence
had yielded . . .”

The Temple of German Art "will not merely signify the outer symbol of this indomitable will of the new government and the German people to rejuvenate that veritable German art, but is, in the first place, to be its lasting domicile, its permanent home, by its works ever proclaiming at home and abroad the innermost substance of the German soul." It seems that Munich had always been the "temple-city of art." "Then came the period when, fomented by a destructive trend of thought emanating from the East, kindled by an un-German mental activity, instigated by a godless, wholly materialistic sodality of enemies of civilization and Christian culture, the wings of Death and Destruction overshadowed all Europe, above all Germany. But almost at the same time arose in our fair city of art the great movement of the defense of all those racial and national virtues which make up the better part of the German character against that Anti-Christ which threatened to wreck the world: and Munich became the bulwark of civilization. . . ."

The imposing dedication ceremonies of the "national temple-home for the artists of Germany" took place in the presence of Adolf Hitler and of the most distinguished representatives of the "now united German states and classes." All Germany jubilated over this lofty act. Now, "vital power will stream from the great temple of art, the enchanting breath from the mountain ranges in the south will course through its colonnades and around its cornices of limestone, and the blue sky of Munich will captivate the German and foreign visitors and will persuade them to tarry at the Bavarian city, the birthplace of national rejuvenation, a longer time than originally intended."

* * *

We have received three distinguished portfolios of *Deutsche Kunst*, issued under the editorship of Ludwig Roselius with the coöperation of Georg Biermann, Eberhard Hanfstaengl, Robert Schmidt, Friedrich Winkler, and devoted to the great painting, architecture, sculpture, graphic art, and crafts of the past. Each portfolio contains one color plate

and twelve magnificent gravure monochrome reproductions, nearly thirteen-and-a-half by nine-and-a-half inches, as well as short text discussions. One issue is entirely given over to an admirable presentation of Matthias Grünewald's great Isenheim Altar in Kolmar.

Fine and Applied

WE ARE informed by the Limited Editions Club that its Director, George Macy, is now in Europe seeking distinguished illustrations for the Club's 1936 distributions. Matisse is to do a series of etchings for James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Sylvain Sauvage a series of water colors to illustrate *Romeo and Juliet*, and water colors are to be made by Pierre Brissaud for *Manon Lescaut*. In England, he will discuss with John Austen a new series of illustrations for *Peregrine Pickle*, with Barnett Freedman lithographs for *Lavengro*, and plans for future books with Arthur Rackham, Eric Gill, Edmund Dulac and Muirhead Bone.

The American "fine" artist, whose rent problems are as acute as those of artists elsewhere in the world, may some day sit down and ponder quietly over the greater resourcefulness of his European brothers. A few more importations of illustrations by such arrived painters as Henri Matisse may indicate to him that the French have never been so snifty about their means of livelihood, about their choice of media for expression. French artists do everything; so do the Germans—or did before they had a temple built for them. Readers of this magazine may remember the articles which Mr. E. M. Benson wrote last year on ceramics and tapestries, in which he showed illustrations of designs by the foremost European painters and sculptors. It may be that the European's more courageous participation in the varied forms of twentieth-century production is the result of a keener historical memory. He may not have forgotten that the great schools of Northern painting grew directly out of Mediaeval manuscript illumination, and that Gothic sculpture was frequently created by the same craftsman who carved benches and tables.



EUGENE SPEICHER: ANNA

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NEW BOOKS ON ART

The Medieval Carver

By M. D. Anderson. New York, 1935. The Macmillan Company, Publishers. Price, \$3.00.

IT IS high time we ceased being so respectful of quasi-scientific research with little more to recommend it than misguided industry. *The Medieval Carver*, by M. D. Anderson, is a typical example of this kind of derivative, post-graduate scholarship. The pity of it is that although Miss Anderson had extraordinary material to work with, she failed to come to grips with it. And the reason for this is that she does not bring to her work the same capacity to probe beyond facts to relationships, and beyond events and objects to their historical or aesthetic significance, with which such art historians as A. Kingsley Porter, Rhys Carpenter, Charles Morey, Wölfflin, Mâle, and Panofsky vitalize their critical contributions.

Certainly the subject itself, mediaeval English carving, offers many interpretative opportunities to an enterprising adventurer in art history. In 1912, Prior and Gardner's two-volume *Mediaeval Figure Sculpture in England* contributed a fresh point of view and hundreds of valuable illustrations; in 1932, Miss O. A. Saunders published her brilliant and concise *History of English Art in the Middle Ages*. But a short, lively study of mediaeval English carving was still to be written—one which would tell us more about that mysterious anonymity, the mediaeval mason: the way he lived and worked; what he earned and how he spent it; what he saw in the world around him; how much of what he saw was transferred to his art; how much of the *Bible* and the *Apocrypha*, the bestiaries and current allegories, the fables and legends found their way into his wood and stone sculptures. Furthermore, we are told in a keen if somewhat evasive prefatorial "send-off" to the book by Professor Constable, there was a rapidly growing collection of reproductions of English mediaeval sculpture that needed to be systematized and described. Miss Anderson's book was apparently written to meet these needs. It is, unfortunately, completely inade-

quate. Except for a good bibliography, many interesting illustrations, some descriptive material on costumes, armor, and building stones in the appendix, and a valuable alphabetized bestiary, there is little in the text to reward either the layman or the most patient student.

Ironically enough, we learn from Miss Anderson's introduction that her book was meant for "the leisurely unlearned with a certain ingenuity of mind." Much of it is obscure and confusing for the specialist and certainly without a map, without a glossary of terms, with illustrations hardly within commuting distance of references in the text, the "leisurely unlearned" would have to have, in addition to "ingenuity of mind," immunity to boredom as well.

It is difficult to believe that Miss Anderson really made any effort to study the originals about which she writes. She gives no clear idea of the setting out of which most of these carvings come, the degree of restoration, the size of the objects, their original color, or what is still more important, their plastic significance. For a full understanding and appreciation of the subject, the layman would necessarily want to know something of the traditions on which the English carver fed—such sources as the illuminated manuscripts, the German ivories, the native Saxon tradition, the liturgy and the liturgical drama, and to what extent these may have left their mark on his work. Certainly the layman would also want to know what was happening in other media, in other places during the same period. A few comparative photographs would have sufficed to give him a time-space feeling for the civilization which produced mediaeval English carving.

Inconsistencies in points of view, tedious digressions, little if any feeling for her subject as creative craftsmanship, superficial and eclectic analysis, in addition to many stylistic banalities, are constant deterrents to understanding or enjoyment of the flamboyant literary descriptions which Miss Anderson passes off as art criticism. Let me cite a few glaring

(Continued on page 445)



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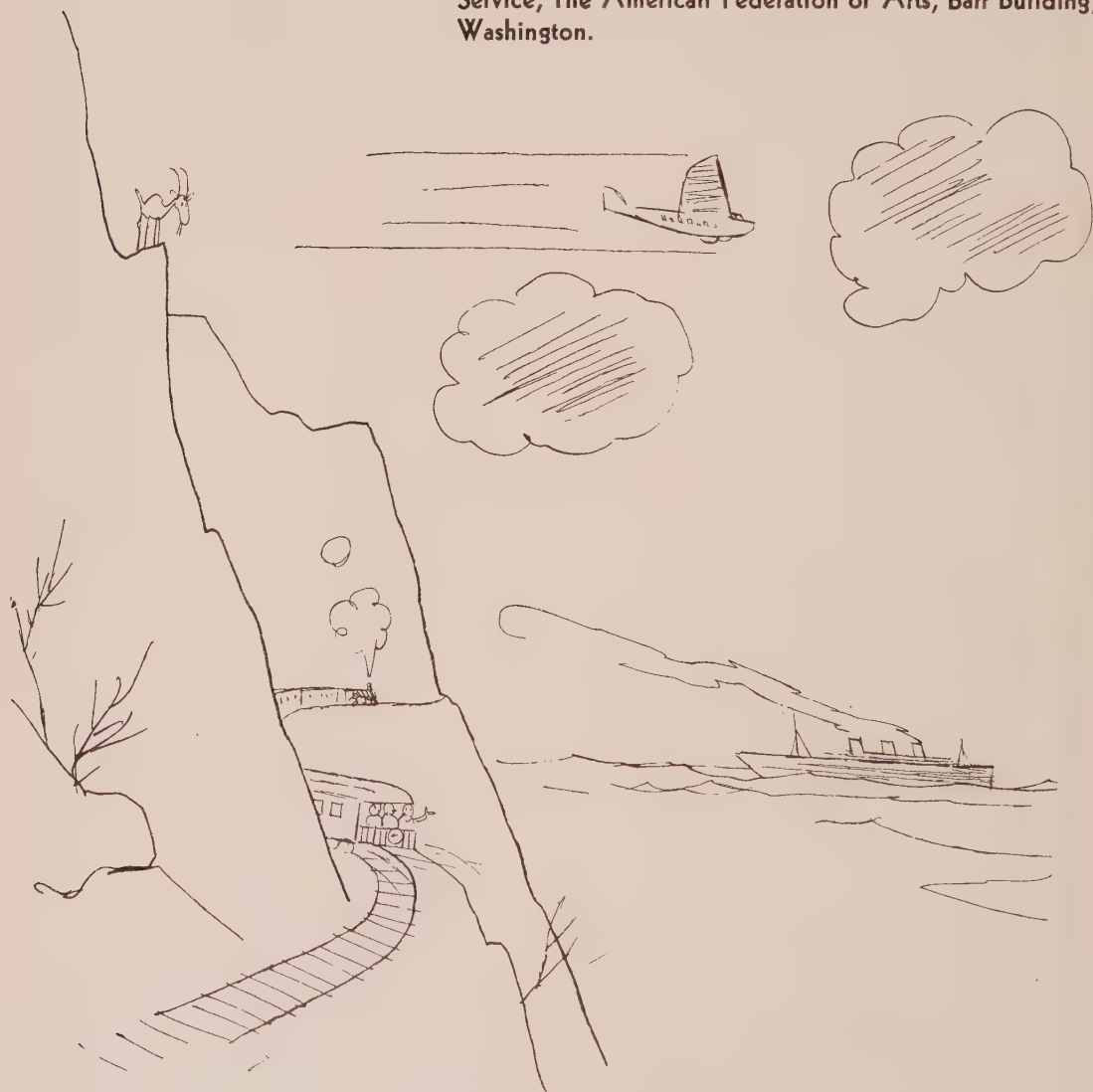


Illustration by Charles A. R. Dunn

WANDERLUST

HAVE you been planning *that* trip to Europe "for years"? If so, delay no longer. Go this summer.

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Calendar of Events

Here is a calendar of events in Europe, which we feel you will not want to miss—covering the period of one month, July 15 through August 14.

July 15

England

International folk dance festival until the 20th, at London.

July 16

Italy

Festival of Madonna del Carmine in Southern Italy.

Poland

Fairs with peasant costumes at Lowicz and Czeszowa.

July 20

Germany

Wagner Music Festival Week opens at Detmold, near Hanover, under patronage of Frau Winifred Wagner.

Sweden

Medieval Musical Plays at Visby, Isle of Gottland, open, and continue until the 23d. Also from

July 21

Germany

Folk and Costume Fetes at Schwarzburg.

July 22

England

Dolmetsch Music Festival until the 28th, at Haslemere, London.

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July 23

Austria

Brueckner Music Festival for 3 days at Linz. Bruno Walter conducting.

England

Summer Flower Show for 2 days at Eastbourne.

July 24

Germany

Festival plays season opens at Munich, continues through the 26th.

July 25

Yugoslavia

Fete of St. Jovan, dances in national costumes at Sibenik.

July 27

Austria

Music Festival opens at Salzburg. Continues through September 1.

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July 28

France

Historic Fete at Fouras, with pageant showing the journey of Napoleon, after Waterloo, to Aiz.

July 29

England

Malvern Dramatic Festival opens. Continues until the end of August.

August 1

Austria

Music festivals at Salzburg—all month.

Belgium

Concerts on the Grand Place and Town Festival at Ypres during the month.

Sweden

Royal Opera season in Stockholm opens.

August 4

Austria

Passion Play at Kirschlag, also on 11th, 18th and 25th.

Germany

Homeland Fete and Costume Show at Benneckenstein.

August 9

Scotland

Highland gathering at Dornock.

August 10

Switzerland

Venetian Night Festival at Thun.

August 11

Germany

Folk fete with costume plays at Kanth, Silesia.

August 13

Hungary

Open air Venetian Fete until the 16th, Esztergom.

August 14

Hungary

St. Stephen Festival Week until the 22d in Budapest. Performances of Peasants at the City Theatre, Folk dances with gorgeous costumes.



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New Books on Art

(Continued from page 440)

examples. About a sturdy, Barlachian sculptured peasant she merely writes "an old woman wields a distaff if only for the purpose of scaring a fox." About another unique figure her only comment is "a man who has taken his boots off the better to warm his feet as he sits by the fire stirring his pot under the longing eyes of his dog." But perhaps the best of the lot, or certainly one of the worst, is the following interpretation: "At Bristol a nursemaid shows two men hauling a pig towards a cratch and a similar scene occurs at Ripple where the pig's squeals are echoed by a sympathetic companion in the background."

Perhaps this is a kind of scholarship, and very likely we should be grateful for Miss Anderson's sharp ears and keen eyes. But in the name of the fifty-odd illustrations, we cannot agree with Professor Constable that Miss Anderson has even "described and arranged" mediaeval English carving into anything approaching "a systematic account of the ideas which inspired the mediaeval masons and builders of England and the forms in which these ideas found expression." There is much in this little book to whet the appetite of "the leisurely unlearned," but very little to satisfy it.

GERTRUDE R. BENSON

Japanese Scroll Painting

By Kenji Toda. Chicago, 1935. The University of Chicago Press, Publishers. Price, \$5.00.

THE excellence of the color prints alone makes this volume a welcome successor to the other publications of the University of Chicago Press in the field of Oriental art, and the sound and informative text by Kenji Toda is a valuable addition to the few books in English which even approximately cover his subject. Thanks to a special fund provided by the Keimeikai Foundation of Japan, the plates for the color prints were prepared and printed in Japan and are of striking quality. Though only about one hundred Japanese scroll paintings have survived, these comprise a wealth of material which is difficult to indicate in reproduction because of the varied

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styles and periods and the dynamic continuity of scroll composition. The twenty plates are excerpts from the scrolls chosen with intelligence by Toda for stylistic and historical significance, but incidentally each painting would merit inclusion in the book for its great intrinsic beauty. They are reproduced for the most part in the actual size of the originals, and, with the exactitude of their color, serve the purpose of illustration more effectively than the few mere photographs with which too many art publications try to cover such broad surveys. One wishes that some other kindly foundation would follow suit and make more of the finer Oriental paintings as readily available to the public.

Toda's approach to the subject presupposes in the reader a certain knowledge of Chinese art and the better known figures of Japanese painting, and consequently his writing is confined mainly to tracing the evolution of the Yamato-e or Japanese painting without becoming lost in references to Chinese painting wherever its influence might easily lead to a digression. Throughout the book one admires Toda's adherence to facts without slipping into free conclusions. A few more generalities would have made the earlier chapters more readable, no doubt, and could have tied together more closely the disparate cullings from his research notes. Many of these might better have been relegated to sections of the appendix, which contains tables of scroll titles, artists' signatures, and a full descriptive catalogue of important paintings—all information of value to the student, but difficult to integrate in the text. And while we are still on the negative side of this criticism, mention should be made of a few faults which intelligent proofreading might have eliminated—the occasional twists in the use of English and certain misprints which are at times disturbing to the sense.

Certain chapters in which one feels Toda's sympathy with his material are excellent reading. His thorough knowledge of the literary background adds material delightful in itself and not on the whole extraneous—since it results in a more complete understanding of the literary allusions in the painting. Literature and painting are neatly complemented

in the chapter on Takayoshi's illustrations for the *Tales of Genji* and the biographical material on Toba Sojo adds much to the appreciation of his charming and essentially Japanese animal scrolls. Toda's ability in the simple narration of stories is of particular value in his discussion of the early religious paintings and the secular narrative, particularly the magnificent ones of the twelfth century to which a knowledge of their social background adds much in enjoyment.

Toda's observations on the technical growth of the Japanese style from the vital early painting, which preserved the balance between decorative values and a telling expression of content, up to the thirteenth century when it was formalized into the academism of the Tosa school, are invariably sensitive. It is unfortunate that the scope of Toda's book does not include the later painting, which succeeded—by the absorption of influences from Sung painting—in infusing new life into Japanese art. Toda's exposition of the material would be interesting.

On first reading, the introduction of a number of Japanese technical terms may seem of doubtful value to the clarity of definition and could in most cases have been used in translation, since the English equivalents are adequate. The student and amateur will find a glossary of these terms useful; but, like so many other specialized bits of information in the book, they need not intrude upon the enjoyment or understanding of the layman—who will easily find a complete picture of the character and sequence of Japanese painting emerging from Toda's presentation.

In noting occasional instances of the difference in approach to the subject between the author's necessarily Oriental point of view and that of the best Western critics, one has the feeling that Toda is more sure of his ground and consequently less given to misinterpretation of the facts through a Western preconception of Oriental aesthetics. Certainly there is room for more books on Oriental art written from this more valid point of view, and the present volume sets a high standard in format and content for subsequent publications.

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Winslow Homer's Early Illustrations

(Continued from page 417)

painter, should have used this theme so seldom in his magazine illustrations. There are a few pictures of Civil War sailors, of the ocean travelers I have mentioned, and a number of pictures of work and play on the seashore. There are a few rare exceptions in which he shows the same dramatic narrative approach of the early sea paintings, but obviously the medium of wood-engraving was ill-suited to the bigness of his later marines.

A delightful example of the shore scenes is "On the Bluff at Long Branch, at the Bathing Hour," August 6, 1870. The ladies in fashionable costume as they battle with the sea wind are full of life, and are beautifully planned compositionally. Even the tiny figures on the distant beach are remarkably individual. The power of the sea, which Homer is later to embody in so elemental a form, is already here, though it reveals itself by its effect on human beings rather than by itself.

Homer's magazine illustrations were, of course, pot-boilers, hack work, in a certain sense, but there is worse training for the artist than the necessity of a steady output

of drawings which must immediately please the public, and not always with subject-matter of the creator's choosing. Homer is almost unique among nineteenth-century artists of his calibre, in that he never got out of touch with the public and yet never fundamentally lowered his own standards. The artistic integrity which he preserved in the midst of this commercial work is indicated by the infrequency of mere sensationalism and sentimentality, in comparison with other illustrators of his period. Taken as a whole, the illustrations show a range of interests unsuspected by the person who is familiar only with Homer's paintings, and are presented with the same healthy and forceful personality.

NOTE: Homer's magazine illustrations are mentioned in most of the general accounts of the artist, but are specifically treated in the following: W. A. Downes, *Life and Works of Winslow Homer*, Boston, 1911, pages 30-80; E. P. Richardson, "Winslow Homer's Drawings in *Harper's Weekly*," in *Art in America*, XIX, 1930, pages 38-47; F. Weitenkampf, "Winslow Homer and the Wood Block," in *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, XXXVI, 1932, pages 731-736; and A. S. Weller, "A Note on Winslow Homer's Drawings in *Harper's Weekly*," in *Art in America*, XXII, 1934, pages 76-78. In the years that Homer was associated with *Harper's Weekly* one hundred and three pictures bearing his signature or his name in the type beneath appeared; to these may be added eight or ten unacknowledged illustrations which are undoubtedly by him.

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Perhaps the American artist cannot now assume those simple and intuitive attitudes which the artist always wants—which most of us want—but he may consciously work toward a discovery of our traditions, attempt to use them, and eventually take his inevitable place.

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